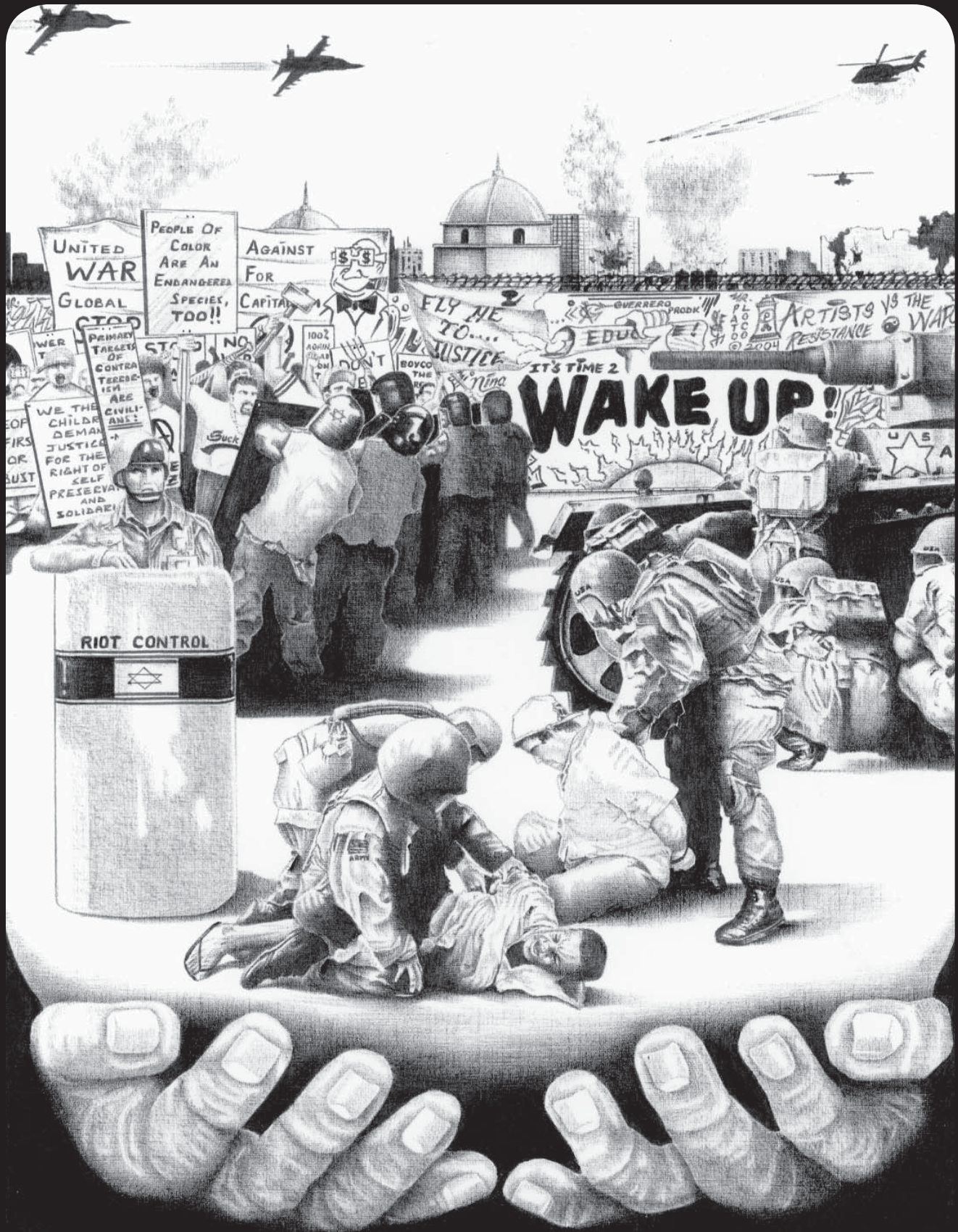


The Beat Within

A Weekly Publication of Writing and Art from the Inside



Volume 9.16



Art By Pato



Editor's Note

The incarceration blues . . . Being incarcerated is such a long and painful trip . . . Over the years, damn near every week, if not every day, we have heard from plenty of you about how the system, be it juvenile or adult, needs to be fixed, how it has played you and how you played yourself. Yeah, you readers, in our eyes, are the real experts, especially the many of you who are traveling or have traveled through the incarceration blues experience and will forever carry the experience with you, even when you want to forget about it.

Today, especially in the San Francisco Bay Area, a host of youth advocates, from the professional to the not so professional, from the young ex-detainee to the old-school guy and gal who have never set foot inside a cell, are asking for the CYA (California Youth Authority) to be closed down for good, particularly after a series of events, which included a couple of suicides, and the use of tiny cages for disciplining and humiliating wards.

At the same time, there is definitely a host of individuals who want to see some type of reform in the state's youth correctional institution, including us at The Beat Within, who know firsthand that many of you can truly benefit from productive and healthy programs during your incarceration ride. We should add that The Beat can be/is an integral part of this movement, too. We have plenty of colleagues who have lived within the walls of the Hall, the CYA, and the adult system. Our Beat "Speaker's Bureau" is a solid group of folks (us) who are simply looking out for you readers. It is not about us, it is not about more money for The Beat, it's about raising awareness and helping our communities recognize and better understand that the juvenile justice system needs an overhaul, from the Hall to the CYA.

One faithful Beat writer, once of the 150 Crew, who is now in CYA/Chad, recently told us in a letter dated 4/21/04 that <ital> "While I've been here I've participated in two riots and several one on ones. I've learned how to tattoo, and I've gotten quite a few tats of my own, too. The program here is OK, I've almost earned all my high school credits and I've learned how to operate a printing press, however on a more sad note, I've learned more bad than good. This place (CYA) is a breeding ground for hate and violence. To survive here you have to be violent or put up a good front. Now that I look back on all my time, I can see the changes I've made to myself. I don't really know how to define it except by saying that I've grown cold to the feelings of others. I get out soon and I'm a little scared. I mean, damn, I came in a boy and I'm leaving a man, and with no in-between experiences to help me along. Yeah, I'm a little frightened." <ital>

What's so disturbing/sad about this note is that it is true for too many wards of this institution, that too many learn more bad than good. Now you Beat experts, tell us, how can one reverse that? Is it possible with the current set-up of CYA, or must other steps be taken?

What do we think? Well, let's get more adults in these institutions who truly care about the young people who are incarcerated. Let's bring in more productive programs. Let's see this great state take a chance, like bring in more concerned community folks who have been there, or folks who are empathetic to the young people and will listen and question rather than judge. Isn't that why The Beat is as successful as it is today? Maybe this is impossible with the way CYA is currently handled. Maybe the CYA truly needs to be dismantled/blown up and the state needs to start over from the ground up with new ideas/philosophies while utilizing more local programs. That would mean giving nonviolent youth, and those who have been successful in state programs, placements which would help them deal with drug, alcohol, anger and parenting issues, as well as receive job training and education. Plus these youth would be given an elder/mentor/teacher who would be there as a support when transitioning to their respective communities. If we could provide that, we might have more successes.

We at The Beat have always believed that you readers and writers of The Beat Within have the answers about what needs to be corrected in the system and in our communities. We look at our very special 9.13 issue on "The System," and as far as we are concerned, the answers are there, or at the very

least, that is where the dialogue should begin. As a matter of fact, this is true with every issue of The Beat, because when you writers step up, you offer valid complaints and ideas from your life experiences.

All right ladies and gentlemen, the topics addressed in our workshops prior to the writing were: 'The Highest Price — Those who choose to play — will pay.' 'Beware of the man who knows the price of everything and the value of nothing.'

This week what we want to know is, who is paying the highest price for your incarceration? Is it your mother? Father? Younger/older siblings? You?

Who or what else is affected by your incarceration, and how are they affected?"

Our second topic was, "If you had to choose between having an intelligent mind or a caring heart, which one would you choose, and why?"

The last topic was "What makes you mad?"

As is always the case with Beat workshops, written gems pop up. Of course they do, how else would we get POWs, Co-POWs, and standouts in every single issue? And how often do writers have such a venue to vent, to create and tell!? The Beat is very common for most of you readers and participants, but in truth, it's a rarity for most individuals to have an outlet in which to publish their writing and have their voices heard.

Speaking of voices being heard, this week the powerful POW (Piece of The Week) voices ring loud and clear in our ears. From the 150 Crew we have Keek, Corn Freaky, Sho-Moe, Lamar, Marcel, Lil' Ray, Ben, Sarkastix, Lil' Cell, Tishay, Gerrell, Brittany, and Mark. Conrade FFrom San Mateo we recognize Broken Glass, Kurupt, and Young Bug. And last but not least, from San Francisco's YGC, Dutch Beez, Diablyto, and Teflon Don.

Before we bring this note to a close, don't forget that we will announce and rerun the four top pieces, as voted by us Beat folk, from our 9th Ed. Note Contest in next week's issue, 9.17. Speaking of Ed. Note contests, our current contest question is: We want to know what your all-time favorite movie is and why. We are curious about why this movie moves you so much. Tell us how it relates to you. Tell the readers about a time, maybe the first time, you saw this movie. We want the inviting details as to why this movie will always have an important place on your movie shelf/heart. Be creative when painting the picture of this special, special movie.

With this said, the deadline for submissions is July 31, 2004. We will award four prizes/money orders for our favorite pieces. Our top prize is a \$100 money order. Followed by a \$50 money order for second place, and for third and fourth place, \$25 money orders. So good luck writers as you attempt to create a moving and telling piece about your all-time favorite movie. We encourage all of you editor's note readers to take this topic on! Now take us to the movies!

Just as we were putting the finishing touches on this ed note, look who just strolled in the door of The Beat? This person was one of The Beat's favorite writers for a good long period. He consistently dropped poetic game and straight-from-the-heart commentary on us readers week in and week out, from the 150 Hall and from Camp, although he first participated in our program in SF/YGC. He was only there for a month, so his writing didn't yet have that POW quality, but for some magical reason this writer stepped up huge from 150. The writer we are talking about, and are so happy to see, is Snoopy. It is so good to have Snoopy come through at 18, off probation, with the desire to work with us! With this said, we want to dedicate this issue to Snoopy for not forgetting The Beat and for taking us up on an offer to work. Let's hope he makes his stay here a memorable one as he continues to plow ahead with a better future for himself.

See, this is the beauty of The Beat — how many young people see the importance of the relationship and consistency we provide in our program while they're incarcerated, and who, when the opportunity arises, will walk in the front door of Beat headquarters, and this includes a number of CYA wards, too, who have overcome the incarceration blues and have made it their cause to lead productive lives. Oh how we wish more programs and more institutions could provide similar opportunities.

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The Beat Within, a weekly newsletter of writing and art by incarcerated youth, is published by Pacific News Service.

At The Beat Within, we go through a lot of trouble to censor inappropriate sexual remarks, foul language, and gang references. There is enough tension in our communities already—we don't aim to bolster it. It is in The Beat's interest to promote peace and unity. Our goal is to educate one another.

The Beat Within publishes the opinions and views expressed by the participants in our workshops. This is simply the pure voice of the youth. The views you read do not necessarily reflect those of the publisher, editor or staff. All rights are reserved. Nothing from this publication can be reproduced without our written permission.

To our writers: What you write could be hazardous to you. Your words have consequences, and could be used to incriminate you. Try to illuminate your feelings and viewpoints without running the risk of providing ammunition for those who might use your words against you.

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Art: Much props to everyone for the great art this week.

Spiritual Advisor: Jack Jacqua

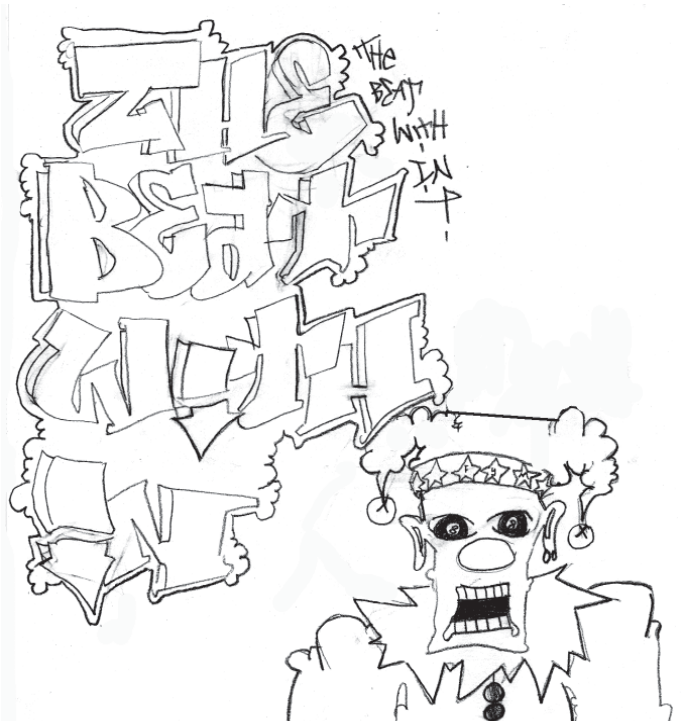
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Writers: Thanks to all the participants in our workshops in the San Francisco's Youth Guidance Center and Log Cabin Ranch School and the Walden House Facility, Maricopa County, Arizona, Arizona House, Canon Barcus Community Center, San Mateo, Napa, Santa Clara, San Luis Obispo, Alameda County, Santa Cruz County and Marin County Juvenile Halls. As well as Riker's Island in New York City, Natural Bridge in Virginia, and Hidden Truth in Rhode Island. If you have any questions or comments about The Beat Within, or if you would like to become a subscriber, contact us at: 275 Ninth St. SF.CA. 94103 or call (415)503-4170 or check us out at

www.thebeatwithin.org

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The Price Being Paid

Who is paying the price for my incarceration? Well, that is a very good question, and I have come to a couple of conclusions. First of all, it would have to be my family.

My mother, she has been in here so many times to visit my brothers and me, and cousins and other family members. However, to just say, "Enough is enough," she has not come to see me in a cool little minute. But I'm not stressing it, because I write her and she returns every single one of my letters — so I know she still loves and cares about me.

My little brothers, also Baby-Lov, Tete, Lil' Javi — I know they miss me around them, telling them in person not to skip school or not to get in trouble and end up in a place like this. 'Cause with me writing them letters and telling them that, they're just reading my letters and putting them back down. But with me on the outs, I could be there in person, and they listen to me in person because they see my facial expression — and they know I'm not playing! But that's as far as that goes.

My second conclusion when I ask myself who is paying the price for my incarceration, is — me! I am paying the price! I could be out and about; I mean, free! And I could be doing something good with my life. But I am paying the price hard. I go to court on the twenty-eighth, and I wonder how much more pain I will have to suffer.

I am way over with me thinking about the price I am paying. Now I am on a mission, and it's about the price they're gonna pay me — "they" as in my employer!

-Corn-Freaky, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Thanks for yet another fine and thoughtful piece from the pencil of Corn-Freaky. You seem to have both your mind and your heart properly aligned to make the changes you want to make. Yeah, you need to be free and setting a good example for your brothers and the others; and what you say about facial expression goes deep when it's someone you love and respect, as they do you. Go chase that degree and maybe a part-time job, so you can have money in your pocket and stay free from the mob — and make your mother proud! You've got what it takes; just don't break — follow through on those goals you seek!

Prisoner Of War

little soldier little soldier
eight years old with an a-k
how do you lie

crying when no one's watching
poking your chest out like a bull
when deep down you're screaming
you are soft inside
with a crusted outer shell
why must you live that way
why are you still here
why does death avoid you
the world may never know
little soldier little soldier
hard to the core
rugged by the years on the street
made hard by the years of pain
you are your own army
the leader of your battalion
yet you feel so hopeless
fear is never on your face
yet it runs through your veins
too young for these ways of life
little soldier little soldier
eight years old with an a-k

-Sarkastix, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Your poem is an instant Beat classic! 'Cause it's both accurate and tragic! Maybe he's eight and maybe he's twelve, but he's mugging like a man when he's a child in hell. You've redefined the words, prisoner of war, for sure!

Wrong

all in one night
can i sit here and write
my thoughts
my feelings
my yearnings
only of you do i think
all of the time
you're like a diamond
lodged in my heart
burning
piercing organs
just to be there
why
must you torture me
when i'm already dead
abandoned by hope itself
just to be adopted by
nothingness
i look forward to pain
just to know i'm here
why can't you see me
i haven't left yet
i don't know why
i really don't like it here

Priceless

are you willing to pay
whatever price
constantly living your life
like you're rolling dice
step outside
with hate in your heart
inside, your animosity
is tearing you apart
swearing you're hard
but your action proves you're a mark
livin' your life wallowing in the dark
supplemental messages hidden inside
peer deep, look close
look deep into my eyes
spine-chilling images you will find
so nerve-racking
it will constantly rattle your mind
i have eyes for the blind
ears for the deaf
and a tongue for the mute
with your mind
it is a challenge to end a dispute
demons possess
police arrest
as the dying take their last breath
for murder
the price is death
mentally spiritually physically
who will fail the test
what is hidden inside this
surely you will see
angels surround us every day
so don't make a mistake
the highest price
is priceless

-Ben, 150 Crew

From The Beat: A life for a life was the price set for murder ages ago; an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth. Yet as you say, to lose your own life — is priceless to you! Thanks for this poem that provides a home for angels to sing, "Stop and think better, 'cause it's a price you don't want to pay, ever."

but i've been here forever

i'm so so sorry
i shouldn't have ever been born
i was a waste of seed
i should have been discarded
but cursed and forced to be here
i linger in your doorway
holding to the last thing i have
left

but even you can't see me
damn i'm ugly
disfigured hideous
but you are not
you are a beautiful abyss
you are me
nothing

-Sarkastix, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We know you feel this way from time to time, but the way we see it, you are a diamond shining in the darkness at the heart of the system. And this despair that creeps up on you, is the flip side of the passion that seizes you and hurtles you toward self-destruction — acting on an impulse, regardless of consequences! Beyond these dark days measured by your despair, your future will shine with promises fulfilled when you get there.



True Colors

I can remember my darkest day
Was a while ago in here
I called and got some news at home
Saying that my Uncle Beady
Got his throat slit on the way home
My heart dropped with the phone
I tried to hold in my tears till I got
my cell
But I broke down in the hall
Why did I make that phone call?
Slithered into my room
I couldn't talk, I couldn't think
I couldn't scream, I couldn't blink
That day was one
of the hardest days
I've ever had to face
The devil pulled me out of the race
Then God sent me someone
to help me

She was there for me
When she barely knew me
Stood by me, even cried with me
For the first time in a long time
Someone cared about me
and mines

I really respect her for that
And I'll always have her back
It's hard for me to show my
gratitude

But homie this one's for you
In my darkest moment
You guided me through
And I appreciate you.

-Broken Glass, San Mateo

From The Beat: For some folk it takes a lot to step up and say, "Thank you," but despite your statement that it's hard for you to show gratitude, this poem is as deep and poignant display of appreciation. How has your homie helped you deal with your Uncle's death? Do you think you'd be able to offer someone else the same support you were shown? We're sorry to read about the death of your uncle.

Money Greedy

Money talks
in the 'hood
and if you've got it, it's all good.
For a minute it is
until the next man
tries to get his,
out of your pockets
that is.
None of your homies
are really your homies
if you've got bread
you're lonely
and if not, you're hongry.
Kids in trash cans
falling into quicksand
waiting for the next man
to lend a hand.
Call it what you want to call it
that green,
the Benjamins
just watch out for those who
distribute them
a man who pays you
ain't ya friend
he'll probably rob you
in the end.
Girls will take they
bras off
if you pay the right cost
and a man
will sell anything
even his momma's wedding ring
for the finer things.
It's all about
yo' paypa chase
look out for you and only you
keep yo' friends close
and ya enemies breathing
next to you.
Money's like crack
you think everyone's after you
and you'll sell your soul
for a hit or two.
Man makes money
money don't make you
but you might look better
with some five-hundred dollar shoes
I'm not stupid
I know it makes the world go round
but what do you have now,
in your cell
when none of it's around?

-Broken Glass, San Mateo

From The Beat: Damn straight — we especially feel the comparison you make between being addicted to money and being addicted to crack. How do you fight, or overcome, the addiction to stackin' chips once you're under the influence? Why are people so willing to sell their soul for a nice 'fit or jewelry that shines? Have you found yourself addicted to the money game? If so, what are you doin' to try to see your way back to sobriety?



Convicted In The Womb (continued)

Plans of getting richer
Stressin' I'm drinking liquor
Pops has been there
Moms is just a picture
Labeled as a criminal
Based on moms prior record
Her friends will dope her up
But nobody never help her
She was killin' me
Suffocated by drugs in her womb
Age three suffocated by the drugs in her room
She'll leave for a week and return with open wounds
My childhood? I missed it
In 2003 I was found guilty
for armed robbery
But I was born convicted

-Dutch Beez B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: There are two things we'd like to say. The first is, we're sorry that you (or any child) had to experience the things you experienced in the womb and beyond. But the second is, you have the skills of a poet, the ability to take those searing experiences and turn them into something beautiful and meaningful. Man, that's art.



9 Make Myself Mad

What makes me mad? What a question... where to begin? Everything makes me mad these days, but most of all, I make myself mad.

I make myself mad when I put my trust in people, and they lie. When I believe my PO will actually release me, I hate myself. I get so caught up in being mad at myself that I keep doing the same shhh, letting myself get hurt again and again...that makes me mad.

But it's not all my fault. The courts, probation, the people in my life...they all make me angry. When I lose everything in my life, and realize I had nothing to begin with, that makes me mad. When my so-called friends abandon me, and my family betrays me, that makes me mad.

I just keep getting madder, and realizing that really pisses me off.

-Conrad, Marin

From The Beat: Part of growing up is realizing that everybody, including your parents, have divided loyalties. They may honestly try to be loyal to you, but they also feel they must be loyal to themselves and what they think is right. At some point, depending how serious the situation is, they're going to choose themselves. And that's going to hurt you. The corollary is that you'll learn that you essentially have to take care of yourself. Can you step back and just watch your friends and family, so you can figure out when you can count on them and when you can't? It's sad, but we all have to do it.

If You Think You're Lonely Now

If you think you're lonely now
wait until your sister dies
wait until your mom has tattooed tears to her eyes.

If you think you're lonely now
wait until you get stabbed and no one comes to the
hospital

none are around
when the doc says
"Living might be impossible."

If you think you're lonely now
wait until the night falls
and no one's around
to watch you fall.

If you think you're lonely now
wait until your man kills
your unborn child
and the devil steals your smile.

If you think you're lonely now
then you're kidding yourself
wait until you're me,
when you know you're lonely
is when you're me . . .

-Broken Glass, San Mateo

From The Beat: For all the hardened exterior you sometimes show, this piece lets us into the depths of your heart and your sorrow. Have you found anyone to help you through your loneliness? When you're feeling all alone, is there anything you're able to do that can put your mind at ease, even if only for a few minutes? You may be deeply lonely, but you're not alone — there are hundreds of lonely voices we read each week, and there is strength to be found in realizing that others are facing struggles as well.

Consequences

Now that I'm growing up, I'm starting to realize a lot of things. One of the things is that since I'm about to be 18 in a few days, a lot of the consequences are going to change.

For being in juvenile hall, this ain't even a punishment for me. It's more like a vacation. When I get out, I'm just gonna be coo' 'cause county ain't NO joke.

But it seems that just a couple of months ago, I was a youngsta only about fifteen or sixteen. Now I look back and think if I could go back in the past, I would have done a lot of things differently.

Like when I was younger, I could get in a fight with anyone an' I wouldn't even trip. But now if I do that, it's all bad.

Wit' the girls too. I would go around freely without a doubt of anything. But now if I mess around wit' the wrong girl that ain't 18, it's a wrap for me.

But I ain't trippin' off the girl part 'cause I got my lady and she ain't a youngsta, so I don't have to worry about that.

But the thing that's been messing most of my homeboys up is that Prop. 21. Charging minors as adults. If you want to get all technical about it and shhh, I'm a grown ass man! But still, everyone has to have something they spooked off, and for me, it's the adult charges that face me if I mess up.

-Kurupt, San Mateo

From The Beat: We think the fact that you're spooked by the consequences of adult charges proves that you are an adult. Only a child would ignore those consequences. So, we think it's time you reexamine the name you've given yourself, because we'd hate to think that you had to prove something by living up to your Beat name. We're proud of you, and the message you're spreading. Keep your eyes on the prize.

Thank God

I think of all of the people you mention who are affected, my mother is definitely one of the most affected because she really loves me. She comes every single day to visit me. That means that every day, after working all day long, instead of going home and resting, she comes here and visits me.

Now I realize how important I am for her, and now I regret all the times I disrespected her and did her wrong. I really hope she forgives me. I'm sorry Mom.

My father never really been around, so I don't think this is affecting him at all. God bless him wherever he is.

I think this is affecting my daughter and my girl because I'm not around to give them what they need, especially my love and care. I apologize for that, but I'm sure I'll make it up for them when I get out ('cause I'm going to be changed for good).

And for myself, I don't think this is so bad after all, 'cause maybe this is what I needed to straighten my life up, and give my family a better life too. I thank God for it.

-Diablyto B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Something has happened inside you, Diablyto, like what happens to a flower when it opens. You have turned into a man right before our eyes, and not just a man, but a man who can express himself beautifully on paper. We certainly hope your mother (and your girl and baby) get to read this heartfelt apology and commitment to a different future. You are not the diabolito you were when you were a child.

**And for myself, I don't think this is so bad after all,
'cause maybe this is what I needed to straighten my life
up, and give my family a better life too.**



Bottled-Up Destruction

I get mad when things don't go my way. But when I'm mad sometimes, you won't even know that I'm mad — because I hold a lot in, you know, keep stuff bottled in. It's not a good thing, but I guess it's a habit.

It started when I was a little boy. I was shy and didn't really talk unless my mother was there. And I didn't really talk to nobody, so when something happened to me or to someone in my family, you wouldn't know how I felt about the situation.

I mean, I got so much stuff bottled up! So growing up, for me, was complicated and very confusing. But then I sort of adapted to the way I dealt with my feelings, but frustration and anger frequently led me to the thought of taking my life — and I would get mad at the littlest things! But after I got used to it, I started to like the way I am. I mean, I'd like to be closer to my family though, and be able to express myself to them.

Anyway, I started hanging out and smoking, and I started walking around on what we called a mission. Doing that seemed like fun, so I continued to do destruction. It seemed like it helped me feel better, but really it didn't — and I came to find out it was just a temporary distraction. I started doing it so much though, I didn't have time to contemplate what was really going on.

I was feeding my mind with so much negativity that it became a habit. But coming in and out of jail, I come to find that it's more out there than I even imagined — and talking to someone can help a lot. I mean, talking has become my place I run to, because it helps. I once was lost, but now I'm found!

-Lil' Cell, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We all know about addiction to drug abuse, but not many know that you can be addicted to drama, negativity and distraction — as you say, it becomes a habit that you can't seem to quit. You even think it's making you feel better when, in reality, it keeps you feeling bad and prevents you from doing the things that really would make your life better. Thanks for your story of how you once were lost but now are found! Just talking to someone and getting some support can turn everything around! Some examples of support are spiritual, a community program, writing on your own, talking to a family member or a friend that wants to do the right thing.

Mouthin' Off

the configuration of life
is how you make it to be
that's why everything
that happens in mine
i blame it on me
it might be the truth
or maybe a lie
but i put myself
in that situation
so why should i ask why
it's always said
that i take responsibility
for more than i can handle
you shine
most of your time
then get put out
like a candle
hey don't we all try
to be in control
most of our time
get too much of
what we're looking for
or surprised at what
we find and sometimes
it's maleficent or ill tempered

that's why i got to remember
that idealism is very positive
because it gives me the courage
to keep going as i live
till this day i stay
thinking back but
it just makes me anxious
to move forward and
never look back
what you get out of life
is what you put in
so you have to have a plan
and this poem
don't have no end
mouthin' off

-Tishay, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Perhaps your poem has "no end", because your forward propulsion will never be stopped again. You don't need to be anxious about the details of your plan, all you need to do is understand — idealism will light your way! And if you stay patient and diligent day by day, it will all come clear; okay? Dictated by circumstance, desire and necessity, your plan will be what it needs to be — and you will be who you were meant to be. Don't sweat the little stuff, just stay on track no matter what!

The Price of Paying

sadness and anger
just knowing your child
is sleeping by a stranger
is enough to make you cry
you don't know why
you think
he did the crime
he has to pay the time
but you don't think it's fair
thirty-five to life
is enough for the child
to start to care
you dream at night
thinking your child
is tossing and turning
he is crying in his bed
inside he's burning
and you know
he is scared to show it
you hope this is a dream
try to control yourself
from having a fit
within you wanna save
but you also wanna
make him pay
for taking that life
with that knife
you wish you were the judge
just to do it over
and you could save your son
hold him on your shoulder
you look at the perfect child
in school and rich
and you look at your own
and you start to twitch
visit three days a week
is that all
to see my child cry
to see my child fall
but i know one day
he will be out
and we will be
a perfect family
we won't have to shout
one day when you get out
me you your father and your brother
will be a family
i hope that time is soon
when we all can be free
but until then
i will keep saying
this saying
in the end you will be
exhausted from the price
of paying

-Gerrell, 150 Crew

From The Beat: The conflicted emotions of the mother of a killer, convicted of murder, are captured in this poem. You take us into the confusion of loving and losing a son to the terrible thing he's done and the terrible price he pays: endless days of incarceration. Her undying love becomes the price she pays, as she prays he'll be okay till his time is done. Anger, fear, hope and despair, overwhelm the heart of a mother who will always care. Thanks for your poem that helps us feel, everyone's a victim when someone kills, not only the one who dies but all the others who survive — to pay the price for the rest of their lives!



My Life: Including the System

My name is Mark. Today I am going to talk about the system. I have one big problem about the system.

I have been in the system for eight years. I am so tired of the way the system works. I have been suffering from major depression for five years!

I've tried to kill myself over ten times — with a knife, pills, putting a rope around my neck, jumping off a high building, walking into moving cars, putting chemicals in my mouth, putting dangerous paints in my mouth. I did these over a couple of times.

I also have bad thoughts about my family being killed, and in my thoughts, I am the one killing them! For some reason these thoughts come into my head. I tell myself I don't want to think of this kind of stuff!

Also I get really bad head pains. And all of this is because I am not with my family. And when I am not with my family, I also get anxiety; I be worried about them all the time! What I have is called "major depression" and it does not feel good at all.

Anyway, back to the system. My problem is, I just don't know why they won't let me go home to my family! When I am with my family, I do good. Why keep somebody in the system when he is suffering major depression, showing all kinds of signs of depression, if he does good when he is with his family? Why not put him there?

To me, that's stupid! I am seventeen years old, and I am at Juvenile Hall because I ran away from my group home. I want to be with my family so bad that I cry a lot when I am alone with myself.

My mother is not really in my life. She don't call me, visit me, or write me — and that hurts! She always say she is going to do something for me, but she don't.

I will be eighteen in March. What's the use of being in group homes when I have not got anything out of them yet — and I have been in the system since I was nine! (I also got abused when I was eight years old.)

I want to be an actor when I grow up. I also want to be a video director and a concert director. I am great at all these things. I hope my dreams and prayers come true.

-Mark, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It's not hard to see why you'd be tired of staying in a system that does not seem to have helped you but maybe hurt you; even if you first came into the system for your own protection after being abused at the age of eight. In a year, you will no longer be a juvenile but an adult; so there is a limit as to how much longer your stay in the juvenile system will continue. Yet, if you continue to be haunted by suicidal/homicidal thoughts and compulsions, you'll need help from somewhere — 'cause it's guaranteed, those aren't the answers to depression! We hope writing helps you work through your feelings. You may not be an actor or director yet, but through The Beat, you have an audience. So keep writing! And don't give up on yourself.

**Girls knowing that their feet
are hurting,
and bodies are tired,
but they tell their pimps
they'll try harder,
but deep within themselves they
feel like a habitual liar.**

The Highest Price

I sold my soul to the devil twice

Playing this game of life

And resurrected the next night like Christ

The highest price is when you slump in the street

Momma cryin' 'cause her baby gone in eternity sleep

Feelin' the pain and the pain ain't peace

He drifted off

That's the price we pay for lovin' tha street

-Teflon Don B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Tight! What responsibility do you think we owe the momma? Knowing the price, how do we choose the love of the street over the love of our mother?

**The highest price is when
you slump in the street
Momma cryin' 'cause her
baby gone in eternity sleep**

Pimpin', You Don't Know Me

Someone is always judging me by the color of my skin, but that's okay because I know what's deep within.

People don't know me, but will call me, black and ugly. When I was younger, I used to care what people had to say about me, but now, I say

to hell with them, because it's a brand new day.

During the day I'm a pleasant young lady,
but as soon as the night comes

I'm the "Main Chocolate Thang," on the track,
tryna make some money just so I can sleep.

Man, these are prices young people shouldn't have to pay.

But sometimes life gets too deep.

Young girls on the track all times of the night, nickel and dime-
in' their bodies,

but still got these so-called pimps in their ears,
telling them to keep trying.

Girls knowing that their feet are hurting,
and bodies are tired,

but they tell their pimps they'll try harder,

but deep within themselves they feel like a habitual liar.

It's vice night and we're tired, some sleep would be good, maybe
the PO can help us get on our feet,

but only God knows.

I don't want my pimp to catch me;

I'd rather be six-feet deep than to keep selling my body.

Would my pimp disrespect his own mother like that
and tell her, "Woman, I'm a Mac"?

I think not, she would slap him, until he was blue and black.

Ladies and Gentlemen, let's keep it real with ourselves, and
respect this game of life.

Times has changed and pockets are tight,
so getting money, is what we don't do all night.

"Hoe or Die" was my slogan,

but resting my feet is my true destiny,

all these so-called men did is bring out the best of me.

-Brittany, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Wow, Brittany you really put out a powerful message here. Sounds like you been through it and you've made the wise decision to rest your feet. What kind of advice would you offer younger females about how to get out of that lifestyle? Are you out of that lifestyle? What do you mean times have changed? What has changed? And how did it? Tell us more.



Mind Or Heart?

minds can come up
with anything
but your heart
knows the truth
your mind
you have to make up
but your heart
knows what to do
a caring heart
is so simple to explain
but a mind is so
unpredictable
and it makes it hard
to figure out
a caring heart feels
what everything is about
a mind is so open
and a heart
can be blocked out
i'll choose a caring heart
'cause that's what part
of life is all about
an intelligent mind
comes for me
naturally
that's why
there really is no choice
but i'll love to have
a caring heart
'cause it's my second voice

-Tishay, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Caring about others helps you care about you, 'cause if you don't care — what's all that intelligence going to do? Take you nowhere you want to be! But why are we showing you what you already see? 'Cause your second voice always takes the lead in your best poetry! And we see what you're saying, 'cause you say it so well. An intelligent mind with a heart that's blind can still lead you to hell. While a heart full of love, helps you rise above.

The Life I Live

I live where I just don't care 'bout nothing. What can I do? What can I say? It's just the way I choose my life.

It ain't nothing to me because people come and they go. Nobody lives forever. If I was to die today, I wouldn't want nobody to cry for me because that's the life I choose to leave.

-Young Bug, San Mateo

From The Beat: Sometimes, it seems like there are no real choices in life. But what usually happens is that if you stick around, opportunities arise. Just remember that loving family that you care about at home. They're worth living for. Is there anyone here that you care about that you can talk to about your feelings?

Why Do I Always Fall For It

Why do I always fall for my mother's games? This past weekend, my mother came to my house with the same song and dance about how she's got a house and that she's ready to take care of me.

I tried to keep my guard up against her lies, but as soon as she started talking to me, I dropped my barriers — and she won. She told me to go with her real quick! So I did. The next thing I know, we were in Hayward going to her friend's house.

Then she "borrowed" my money to invest in some drug stock. After that, she got a glass pipe, and I already knew what was going down! She lost control of her addiction — the same battle I fight every day! She lost in only a couple of hours in the city.

It weakens me every time, because I know it's too late — she lost her soul a long time ago. I still have hope for her. I still want her to take care of me, but it's too late. I am already a grown man with my own mind and life.

But again, here I am — broke, confused, sad, and hopeless for my mom's recovery. I still have my clean time under my belt. So I am still fighting. And I know that's what counts. But why do I fall for it all the time?

-Sho-Moe, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Sometimes our greatest strength is also our greatest weakness. You have a heart that is full of compassion, hope and love. And you know it's your heart more than your mind that keeps you clean. Just look at your mom and see all the confusion a mind can stir up when the heart's not right. Her heart is still a slave to her addiction, or she wouldn't do that to the son she loves — but her addiction loves no one, not her son or herself. It is a form of insanity (see Step Two). It's heartbreaking how her addiction plays her and you; just don't let your addiction play you, too — or you're through. Let it be another lesson in your recovery. See what addiction does with money? If you don't use — never — you won't be broke forever.

Payin' The Price

I'm physically payin' da price, but think twice, I'm not the only one sufferin', my entire family is strugglin'.

Moms gotta take time out of her busy day to come see me on Wednesdays.

Grandma gotta dip into her bingo money to buy me chips an' shhh on Sundays.

Dad's bustin' his ass so we can have our own pad.

Uncle P said, "Come sis, stay wit' me. You won't be free but living will be a lesser fee."

My cousin, Nick, I can tell he's sick. He misses and needs me almost as much as I do him. I'm his best friend an' we're down fo' each other till the end.

Time's flyin' by and my family needs me.

The puzzle's not whole without the fourth corner.

My being incarcerated has created so many changes.

Oscar's starting to talk and he's wonderin' where I am. He's also payin' da price. He's losin' out on guidance from an experienced man.

Alot has happened but I'm still locked up. I feel like just another mess up!

Sittin' on the cold concrete floor lookin' at the locked door I'm reminded who's payin the price.

-Keek, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Thank you for letting us into your thoughts. They are so real and important to hear. You lay it all out there. Not too many can admit to all who suffer because of him. That takes courage. Realization and change starts with looking outside your self and your needs. Being down for someone sometimes can really mean bringing yourself down and the other person down with you. We hope you and your cousin can start living well for each other and supporting each other in a way that will not get you locked up.

**I'm physically payin' da price, but
think twice, I'm not the only one
sufferin', my entire family
is stugglin'.**



The Price

Who is paying the highest price? Me, because I'm going through all this stress coming back from CYA. My mom and my brother, too, but at least they got their freedom, get to use the bathroom when they want to, eat whenever they feel like it.

CYA has the most racist staff I ever seen, wards getting jumped by gangmembers. The only thing I like is that you can have money on your books, eat whenever you want to. The part where I feel naked is how the staff got to watch you shower and how you got to strip down every day when you go to sleep. Wards getting AIDS because they using the same tattoo needles on each other.

CYA is not no place for minors, it's too crazy, making knives with paper and sugar, seeing minors get raped, screaming because they can't do nothing because with gangs it's almost five on one every time. Anything goes down.

-Lamar, 150 Crew

From The Beat: There is a price to be paid with every decision that's made. Did you learn anything from your experience with the system? What will you be doing differently when you get out of the system to ensure that you don't come back? How do you deal with the painful memories of CYA?

Caged By Ourselves

raising fences
opening doors
closing eyes
opening ears
speaking out
but shutting in
why must we set restrictions
and call ourselves
"the land of the free"
how can personal indulgences like drugs
be illegal
but slavery isn't
how can we kill with no remorse
and cry when someone close dies
govern a whole country
but have no self-control
we are the people of our nation
plagued by individualism
life can seem fun
and very exciting
and yet we still wish for death
destruction we seek upon ourselves
we call ourselves the top nation
yet can't control each other
how did we make it
how did we make it
god must have one hell of an imagination

-Sarkastix, 150 Crew

From The Beat: As individuals and as a nation, we can hide the truth from ourselves; in which case, there is no end to our self-destructive hypocrisy. Tell the truth, young Sarkastix, about yourself, about your nation, and about your world! Peace.

**how can we kill with no
remorse
and cry when someone
close dies**

Sad Times, Chapter One

You see me around, but you don't really know me, don't know the story of the warrior and how I survived in this game, I ain't never had nothin', had to work to get it or I had to steal it. Most of the time I was hungry, that's why I did it, I ain't foolin' with ya.

I was a young teen, me and moms got kicked out, but moms took responsibility of being grown and was damned if we was homeless on the streets. But with my homies, I learned how to slang every drug from heroin to weed to speed to crack to sherm.

When I was broke and couldn't afford things, I was schemin' and plottin' on things and, yes, you know this, I come from a long line of thugs and struggles, hustle what we could rustle up. It might have not been too much, but we always got just enough.

Hard times kept the family together through all the windy weather, and homeboys, whenever you need to roll, I'm gon' be there, you know me — I stay organized and devoted in the streets, especially when I didn't have a place to sleep and none to eat. Me and my family goin' through some thangs, it's hard, but damn, it got me off the hinges. It's against my religion as a Christian when I get locked up, so you know I really can't comprehend it.

My mother and brother told me "stay strong and keep ya head up" in the Y, if that's where you goin'. But if we right or wrong, I can't understand it, it's like if the purpose was to have a youngsta struggle. I don't think moms should have had me, as I drop to my knees, can't you see I ain't happy?

-Lil' Ray, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You have been through some hell and we can tell you one thing — you are not a victim — you're a survivor! It is not the struggle that defines our character, but the way in which we deal with our struggle. What can you do to turn a tragic past into a triumphant future?

**What makes me mad is
when people say things
that are not true**

All In One

What makes me mad is when people say things that are not true, when people mess with me, when I'm not feeling well or when I'm in a bad mood.

I would have an intelligent mind because I made a stupid move to be here, and I will have a caring heart because you want to be cared for back and you want to care about someone else.

I'm paying the price and my parents are. I'm paying the price by messing my career up and coming here, and my parents are paying the price by me not being there for them to wake me up every morning to go to school.

And younger siblings, why? Because every day when he/she goes to your house, he or she does not see you and be like, where is he at? Why is he not here? Why I don't see him? Why he don't play with me anymore?

And my whole family, why? Because, I should be there and not in Juvenile Hall.

-Marcel, 150 Crew

From The Beat: That was very creative to combine all three topics into one! How can you avoid getting too mad over little things? How can you make up for lost times with your family? How can you be a better role model for your younger siblings? You wanna be there for your family — be there! What can you do so that you never see yourself in this same predicament again?



Life In My Cell

I'm writing through the mail 'cause that's the only way I can. I've been on lockdown for 72 hours now. I can't have a roommate 'cause of what I did, and I did a very stupid thing. If you'd like to know, I'll tell you: I snuck in weed and smoked it.

I just needed that weed so I can forget these days in here, but I can't. I learned today when I went to court that every day I wake up to this cell every day and it 'cause it's all on me (a friend told me once but I didn't believe). I had everything before I did this stupid thing — I was a three-step, I got to pick my own clothes and hook my friends up and stayed out of my room all day till 9:30 pm and loved it. But now I have nothing — I'm a one-step, lost my home pass, can't have a roommate, and they might send me to CYA next court (April 2, 2004). I hope not but I messed up.

What I really want to talk about is my life in my cell. Some things are good, but then again it's all bad. Well I've been catching up on my workouts, cleaned my room after they burned it hella times, and have been writing everyone and drawing great stuff which I was going to send in today until a staff hated on me, but I'll get it to y'all one way or another — don't trip.

I just got done reading this week's issue. I really enjoyed a piece in The Beat Without by the Poetic Prisoner about YA. I also wrote a little something to Fireball, hopefully I can get it back 'cause I meant what I wrote and hope she enjoys it.

Well let me start on how my day goes. I wake up at 7:30 am, clean up the back in my room. 8:00 am: breakfast time, which is in my room. Then I'm in my room sleeping, writing or reading, sometimes working out. Then at 3:30 pm it's shower time. Then I go and enjoy a shower by myself 'cause I don't like showering wit' other nasty females. Then it's back to my room. 4:30: dinnertime, this is when I eat. Then I do my hygiene (in my room), then there's the staff break between 5:00-6:00 pm. Then all the other inmates come out for program while I'm in my room. Then at 8:00 pm they come in, then it's snack and workout for me till graveyard comes.

Then it's sleep time, then wake up tomorrow and start another day — but lucky me, my favorite staff works tomorrow (the only one that don't hate on me) which is Ms. Mendoza (I love you) and she's gonna let me clean all the bathrooms (which is a privilege for me). Cleaning consists of taking the water hose and the all-purpose cleaner and spraying down all the bathrooms then scrubbing them. I really can't wait, and she's even gonna let me stay out at wakeup time to help KPs. She's really helping me out — she lets me do stuff so I can get my threes (thank you) which I need so I can become a two-step next week so I can have more privileges. Man, I love Ms. Mendoza — she's great!

Well that's my life right now. Hopefully it gets better. Well, till pen meets paper again I'm out. Keep y'all heads up; I am.

-Peewizzle, San Mateo

From The Beat: We were wondering where you'd gone. On one hand, you were thinking smuggling pot in? C'mon — of course you were going to get caught, and of course it was going to be all bad. Having said that, we feel for you — while illegal, we can think of things that happen on the daily in the Hall that seem to be even more harmful, and any scenario that has you basically in isolation and looking forward to cleaning toilets is one that demands some sympathy. It seems somewhat counterproductive that the consequences involve isolation instead of some sort of drug treatment or counseling — if you wanted a blunt before, we can't imagine how you feel now. We hope you're able to keep writing, and we look forward to seeing you back in our workshops soon.

**I am aware of a man
who knows the price
of everything and
the value of nothing.
That man
will be me.**



The Highest Price: Family

I am a man who chose to play the game when I was in the outs. I am aware of a man who knows the price of everything and the value of nothing. That man will be me.

The people who are paying the price are the ones that love me in the outs, and that would be my mom because she hurt every time I get locked up for the stupid shhhh I do.

I think my sister and nephew are paying the price because I'm close to them and I been close to my sister since I was small. Now that my nephew is growing up, it's kind of messed up because I'm not there to see him grow.

It's also screwed up because I can't be with my pops. Me and him have been very close. He is someone I could trust. I talk to him when I'm down, and I tell him what I'm about.

I miss my girl because I love her and she is someone I could trust. She's there during my ups and downs and my goods and my bads, and how I'm spending seven months of my life for some stupid stuff that I've done. Like my family, my girl is also paying the price.

-Lil' Weasel B1, SF/YGC

From The Beat: If the things that have brought you here are truly "stupid stuff," then it's in your power to stop doing it so that your mom, your sister, your cousin, your pops and your girl don't have to pay the price. You've put them and yourself through a lot. What do you plan to do when you get out to make it up to yourself and them?



I'm Sorry

Dear Mama,

I miss you. I am sorry from all the things that I have done. I'm sorry I am putting you through the thing that I have put you through and it ain't nothing but a disaster.

I wish we can put our family back together 'cause life is not easy for us being spilt up. I'm tired of living this lifestyle that I'm living; I wish I can change things back to the way they were.

Momma, when I get out of CYA. things will be better for us.

-E Feel It, 150 Crew

From The Beat: A mother's heart is precious. How will you make things better with your mom when you get out of CYA? What can you do to make up for lost time with mom?

Who Pays

I think my mother pays the highest price for my incarceration because she misses being around me and knowing I'm safe.

Even though it would seem I would pay the higher price because I'm incarcerated, but I have to pay the price for the act I committed. My mother didn't commit any crime, but she still has to pay the price also. The price she has to pay is her only son isn't by her side or at her attention when she needs him. So she's paying for something she didn't do, but I did.

My price I have to pay balances out because for every positive there's a negative. That's the reason my mother pays a higher price, because it's not fair to her, she shouldn't suffer for what her son did.

The second person affected by my incarceration is my little brother. Even though he is only a year younger than me, I still call him my little brother. Anyways, my little brother and I always do stuff together and when one of us is separated, the other doesn't function right. My little brother and I are practically twins and now if something happens to one of us, we wouldn't know.

-Big Samoa, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You're right. It takes a big man to acknowledge the situation he's created. Now that you realize the full consequences of your incarceration, do you think you will handle your life decisions differently?

Intelligent Vs. Heart

If I had to choose between an intelligent mind or a caring heart, I would choose an intelligent mind because with an intelligent mind you can probably get a caring heart to come with it.

With intelligence, you can think of other people's feelings and that's like having a carin' heart. Out of the two, which one I think I have the most of is probably a caring heart. Not sayin' that I'm stupid or don't have intelligence, but if I was that smart, I wouldn't be up in here, although it was a mistake.

Sometimes my caring heart has got me into trouble too, 'cause people like to take my kindness for weakness. I have gotten smarter though and I learned my lesson from the mistakes I made.

-Young Ant, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You have great insight and thanks for shedding some light on us with your opinion. Do you think that one day you can have both — a caring heart and an intelligent mind?

To The End Of My Demise

To the end of my demise I will fear no evil

I'm blowin' smoke through the skies

from witnessing death from my eyes

Listening to mothers while they cry

Saying, "Why? Why?"

Next day more shots

Never thought that I would get shot

But didn't die

Tears in my eyes

Would I make it? Don't matter

Everyone goes

But till the end of my demise

I'm going to stay me.

-Cecil B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: It's those mothers crying "Why? Why?" that gets to our heart and soul. It makes us ask the same question. Why must this scene be played out again and again? Does your close call with death make you want to change anything?

My Mom

My mom is paying the highest price. Because I'm locked up, I know she's hurting. She's in a lot of pain and stressin', I wish I could be able to do something about it, but I can't do anything while I'm in here.

Only if I could turn back the hands of time, I would change a lot of things, like who I be around, where I be around, and what type of shhh I get into. I know it's not a coincidence that I'm back, there's gotta be a reason, I just hope it's a good reason because the highest price that I'm paying is the time I'm going to waste.

Instead of being here, I can spend the time with my family. I got a lot of love for my family, especially for my moms, 'cause she has a lot of love for me. And she's been with me by my side through all this stuff. I just hope I can be free soon again, but never come back.

-Lil' John, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It was once said, "if you don't appreciate what you have — you don't deserve it." Sometimes we have things and we forget how lucky we are to have them. Can you find a way to show your mom that you love her? When you are released, do you think you will try to build a new life for yourself? If yes, how? If no, why not?





From Room Two To You

Soon, I'm off to da Y.
I wonder why the thug life is what I choose, but to be mad and wish that I should have listened.
Moms and pops said "stop actin' a fool an' take yo' ass to school!"
But no, my head's concrete and I'm just startin' to crack.
I learned da hard way and now I have a whole lot of advice to give away.
Tomorrow's a new day, so try and try again not to stray from da Lord's way.
I'm quickly learnin', and bein' locked up really got me yearnin'
for a better life with a lot less poverty and strife.
Wishin' gets you nowhere, actin' can get you anywhere.
My father has told me over again, "do what you gotta do to do what you want to do!"
To me that quote from my father explains the meaning of a man.
Take care of business, stop messin' up, you're just settin' yo'self up.
My pencil to paper can mean a lot to some,
but it's up to you to take it and run.
Another piece from that brother Keek!
Keep your heads up!
It's not over.

-Keek, 150 Crew

From The Beat: So many words of wisdom from your mom and dad. We can tell that you are finally hearing it. It's hard to listen when there are so many reasons you find to be scandalous. What are some of those reasons? Why did you think this way and how can you change this habit of the mind and body? Your words are inspirational. We know it ain't over.

Take care of business, stop messin' up, you're just settin' yo'self up.

The Highest Price

My family is paying the highest price including me. My mom is paying a very severe price when her friends ask her where am I, and she has to lie to them. I'm also paying a very severe price because I'm not free to do what I want.

My family worries about me on a daily basis because they don't know what's going to happen to me. I also worry on a daily because I don't know where my life is going, and that scares me a lot.

Basically, everyone around me is being affected by me being incarcerated. My family has to go through the horrible ordeal every time they visit me in here.

My family tells me the house feels a lot different since I'm not there anymore. Everyone is always crying and sad. This phase of my life is a huge disappointment to me and my family.

-Abbas, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Very good writing, Abbas. This is a very hard time but it will one day be a thing of the past. It's scary not knowing what's going to happen to you but keep up your prayer and faith that whatever happens you will be okay. You have a very supportive family and although they are sad right now, these hard times are bringing you closer together.

The Poster

On one of the cold cement walls I saw a poster today that said, "Pain is weakness leaving the body." I wonder if this is true.

I think of all the things done to me, then it comes back, the pain and suffering that I have had to endure in my short yet eventful life. If pain is weakness leaving the body, then why is cutting so bad? Because it's self-inflicted harm? But what is the difference between hurting yourself and being hurt by others? Isn't physical pain better than emotional and mental pain?

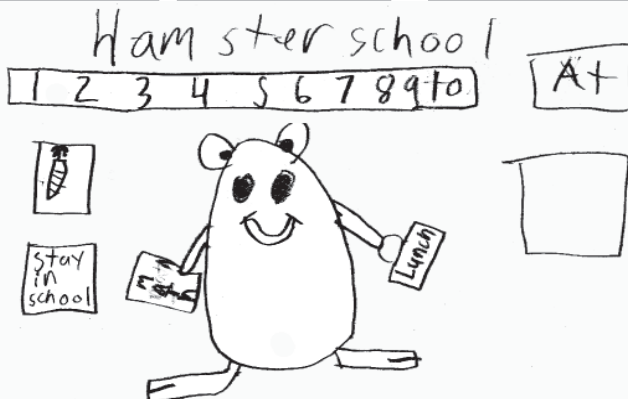
That's what I think sitting behind the locked metal door. All I can really do is think about the few people that matter to me. I don't have many people that I care for or that I know care for me. But sometimes the pain is too much. I want to give up but I can't be weak. I want to cut so bad sometimes, but I know if I did, I would hurt the people I care about.

I have a great controversy within myself. I know people care, or at least they say they do, but sometimes I can't bring myself to believe them. Because of all the times people have told me that in the past and then have hurt me and left me when I really needed them.

Behind the locked steel doors, and the cold cement walls, it all gets to me. I can't even call my loved one, the one person who can always help me. All I have is myself, and I can't be weak, so why not do it.

-Adriana, 150 Crew

From The Beat: What that poster is saying is interesting, and sounds like it could be true in certain cases, but not in all. We've heard that cutting can be a relief, but, as you know, it's temporary escape, a way to take your mind off of what's truly hurting you, and a way to be in control of your own pain. At the same time, cutting is very destructive. What else makes you feel in control? Is writing a way to release your pain? We hope you've talked to people about your cutting and, maybe more importantly, what causes you the pain that makes you want to cut. Thanks for sharing this issue with The Beat. We're sure you're not alone.





There Once Was a Child

there once was a child
who was scared to death
tryin' to hide his fear
tryin' to do his best
to keep up in school
but the more he was hurt
the more he acted a fool
hurt in all the wrong places
seen too many faces
looking down on him
as if he has done
something wrong
but if they only knew
what he went through
lasted long
so anger built up
and kept exploding
at that moment his life
was torn up and folded
confused for life
about his past
and wondering how long
this confusion will last
and when he finds out
he will be set free
but as i look in the mirror
i find this child is me

-Gerrell, 150 Crew

From The Beat: The power of inspired truth in you is fighting to be heard. And when it hits the pages of The Beat, hundreds of others can read your words and see, the pain you portray is the pain they feel! But the highest goal of inspiration is to lead them successfully through their sad situation, providing them with an exit plan and motivation to change what they now understand as mistakes of the past. When you teach by your words and your life, it helps you get it right! At last yesterday is history, but tomorrow's still a mystery — all you have is today. So do the best you can right now, okay? And keep writing, everyday!



Young And Dumb

Man, I'm sitting here writing to The Beat, and I'm just thinking about how most of us young people do dumb things.

Even though I know we're young, still growing and still learning — it seems like some things we do that's dumb, we'll do it over and over again knowing that it will bring us the same bad results.

So to all people that's young and who keep doing dumb things, please stop! Because the odds are against all of us young people anyway. They say we won't see eighteen, let alone twenty-one! You feel me?

So I'm 'a start with myself and try to change and get more mature. Then hopefully the little kids that look up to me, and even other people in my own age group, will see at least one person doing positive! And hopefully they'll choose to go the same way.

Because the way the system is now, they're trying to keep as many people as possible locked up — so it won't be no future for nobody, especially the youth of this country! They trying to get us used to jail so we'll be used to other people controlling us.

Then they can stay on top, controlling us — and molding us so that we will depend on them. So, if you're young and you do dumb things, stop.

-Markie-bo, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You make a convincing argument for yourself and others to stop doing "dumb things" that lead to lockdown. Good judgment is the benchmark of maturity. And whether you call it immature or just plain crazy, making the same mistakes while expecting different results — is very bad judgment. We've always seen your intelligence displayed in your writing; now we see your wisdom, too. Be that role model who decides to change and follows through; and you never know who might follow you!

I love my parents dearly and I apologize for everything I put them through

Sorry, My Apologies To You

There's a lot of stuff on my mind right now. I'm going to start off by saying how much of a problem I think I was from the age eleven to where I am now.

Me and my mom didn't really get along at all, I mean, we did sometimes. Me and her would argue and fight (fist-fight a lot). I admit I was a little out of control. I sometimes would wild out for nothing at all. I tried my hardest to do good, but nothing would work. Then it got to the point to where I went to group and foster homes. Now look where I'm at, in juvenile hall.

I love my parents dearly, and I apologize for everything I put them through. I hate where I am at and when I get out, I am going to do better and be better in school and in social groups. I just want to say, you don't know what you have until you're locked up or it's gone.

I hope to be a better person. I find that boys aren't your cure, neither are so-called friends. You have to really look inside yourself and want to change, like I do today. I was bad socially in school and at home. I am trying to change that, but it's not going to get changed by me being locked up in a place like this.

There's times when I think I don't need to live. But, I think nobody will ever be able to see me change or the new me. And for all you people who think I am trouble and not success, you'll see one day. So, do good and mind your parents and love them, they love you.

Mom and dad I feel like crying because I really apologize for all the things I put you through.

-Deanna, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It's nice to hear the new you. The you that you are trying to be. This is a really sweet letter; you should share it with your parents. You are a smart girl, what are the steps you need to take to get on the right path? What do you think your parents and you can work on so you'll have a better relationship?



COMFORT

take C-omplete responsibility
for your action
and show comfort and love
O-pportunity to show love
to all your loved ones and family
no M-atter what you do
always remember the person
that took care of you
F-riendship that always
stays together and gives you
good advice when you need it
always be O-ptimistic
and show positive behavior
to increase your relationships
R-espect yourself and other people
because you never know
when you might need that person
T-technically just be a loving person
and help other people

-Telefaro, 150 Crew

From The Beat: If you comfort and help others as an act of love, love will surround you, as you say in the poem above.

Telefaro's Page

FEEL ME

F-rustration without
consulting communication
E-xcellent instrument of integrity
in use in the time of need
E-stimation of life
just can't be retrieved
L-oneliness and anger just don't match
communicate and don't separate
because it will destroy you in this game
M-aintain your responsibility
as a man and don't be irresponsible
E-ntertainment but don't let
entertainment destroy you
it's always time to shine
even if you're down
feel me

-Telefaro, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Creative! Inspiring advice! Good communication is key to positive sociability, but if you behave irresponsibly — entertainment can become a disease that will drop you to your knees.

C-omplete responsibility for your action and show comfort and love

It's A Shame

i think it's a shame
that people have to die
but i don't know why
so i sit back and cry
praying to god
that no one won't shoot me
in between the eyes
feel me
i strive day by day
looking for the prize
but i fail to realize
that the price is right
here in my eye
but i'm selfish
and i don't want to
give up my pie
to help another guy
because all he want to do
is waste it
because he don't want to strive
who am I, johnny four eyes
so my oakland people reunite
and make sure that my
newborn baby and your mother
both have a safe ride
for the rest of their lives
feel me

-Telefaro, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It's kind of like sand, try to hold it in your hand and it slips through your fingers. But let it go and you can walk down the beach while the hot sun lingers. As for unity — mothers and babies really do deserve to live in a safe community!

APPRECIATE

A-ppreciate yourself and everyone around you
P-repare yourself for reality
don't let nothing deprive you
P-eople reunite and stop the violence
R-espect yourself and your surroundings
E-xercise your communication skills
and be smart — be brilliant
C-ommunicate and make our spot a better place
I-nsure yourself to a better life
A-ssociate yourself with positive people
T-ake care of your life and your body
E-verybody try to be safe and enjoy the party

-Telefaro, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Make a list of a hundred things you're grateful for. It might not be easy to get a hundred, but when you get it right — you'll be better able to appreciate what you have in life.





Getting My Life Together

I look at life like a gift because I was able to see another day, that's a blessing from God. Sometimes life can be not so good, but life is what you make it.

A few months ago I was just doing things I knew I shouldn't be doing. But I'm going to change my life. I have been in the Halls seven times and this is the last time I'm coming because I have made up my mind, and I'm willing to change my life for the best.

The first thing I have to do is start holding myself accountable for my actions. Every night I pray to God to help me make my life better.

-John, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We're glad that you've decided to get your life together before it's too late. What can you do to make yourself accountable for doing good things? Good luck with your change!

Lied

If you remember me saying a few issues ago about how at court they said they were going to put me in a placement to help me and prepare me for being on my own. Well, then you also remember me saying, "I'll believe it when it happens." Well, it doesn't seem like is going to happen.

Today some big guy pulls me out of this sorry excuse for a class room/school, and the first thing he says is "I hear you are a mess up from your father" (the one who kicked me out) and how I should just get comfortable here because there's no way I'm getting put in a placement any time soon.

Then he starts talking all this shhh about how when he feels like putting me in a placement, he is going to put me in somewhere deep down in California and if I make it on whatever program I go through at 18, I can go free and on my own. So in just what he said, it shows that what the courts, judges, DA, public defenders say don't mean shhh.

In court I was told I was going somewhere close, well, "deep down" ain't very close. Also, somewhere I could get a job, but he says it's not any of the ones I would go to, and also one with some sort of ILS program to help me with a place to stay and school. He said that's not going to happen.

-Daniel, 150 Crew

From The Beat: That sounds like a messed up situation to be in. But oftentimes we learn the biggest lessons from our darkest days. Now, there are a couple of things you can do. Like, what can you do wherever you are sent to become an independent young man? What can you do to make the best of your program? By the way, who is this "big guy," and have you talked to your public defender about what he said? Maybe he doesn't have the final say. It's worth checking isn't it?

Who Is Paying The Highest Price For Your Incarceration?

Everybody in my family suffering for me because I'm not out there helping them. My mom and dad are suffering because both their oldest sons are incarcerated.

It hurts me the most 'cause I can't do what I want; I got to listen to the next man tell me to do. My little sisters are suffering 'cause they don't have their older brother there to watch over them and help them in school and with their homework.

-Lil' E, 150 Crew

From The Beat: With every choice that's made, a high price is paid. What can you do to prove to yourself and your family that you will change your ways? How can you show them that they're more important to you than what got you into the Hall?

Everything Costs

Everything cost you no matter what you do, from shopping, to hustling, to sports and going to school. Some things might cost you more than others; what you have to decide is what is the highest price you are willing to pay to be the best at what you want to do.

If you aren't applying yourself hard enough and aren't striving yourself to the fullest, then you won't excel to the greatest achievements in the end. The higher the price and sacrifices you make — the better the results of your goals will come out.

People say, "How you know about paying prices?" It's because I'm from the Oakland and being from there, you see people paying the price for what they do every day.

-Pricey, 150 Crew

From The Beat: That's real! "If you reach for the sky — you're bound to catch a star!" Or "you reap what you sow." Are you willing to sow good things so that you can reap freedom? What have you been striving for lately? Did you get where you wanted to be?

The Life I Lead

Semi-automatics, killa tactics,
shhh that's drastic

Either die old or find an early casket.

Moms stressed out

Her son took one in the mouth.

The life I lead, seein' youngstas bleed

Smashin' in stolos, I get memories of high speeds

Wishin' for a better life, pushin' to strive

With all this madness filled with sadness

Who knows when it's their time to go?

Another soldier swolled with bullet holes.

The world only gets worse

where ninjas only carry guns and kills babies at birth.

You can either change

or take bullets like a target at a shooting range.

The smell of death is nothing nice

so watch the life you lead 'cause you might pay the price.

I am.

To the homies stay up! One love.

-Lil' Rickie, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Sounds like you know the consequences are high. Are you just gonna let freedom pass you by? Do you like where this road is taking you? Can you take a different path before you hit a dead end?

If

If I had to choose between being intelligent or kind-hearted, me myself, I would choose intelligence because you can get farther in life by being intelligent than being nice to people.

Another reason is, sometimes people do mean shhh and they act like it don't matter. So why be nice to people all the time if they are out to get over on you and out for themselves?

But I guess I'm like that because I from Oakland; ninjas is out for themselves. Forget the next man, that's just how I feel about the situation. What about you?

-Dante, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Who do you think lives a fuller life — an intelligent person or a caring person? Do you consider yourself intelligent? Why or why not?



Mind Over Feelings

If I had to choose between having an intelligent mind or a caring heart, I would choose an intelligent mind. People with a caring heart are usually naive and make choices simply because of their benevolent attitude. They're usually optimistic about everything and let their decisions be affected by wanting to help someone else.

I'm not saying there's anything wrong with wanting to care about and help other people, but intelligent people know how to make decisions by disregarding their emotions. For example, if you were to apply for a job with a family member, they're going to give you the job regardless of if you have a good work ethic or not, simply because they care for you.

Now if you knew someone that was an intelligent business man and you know each other very well, chances are he's going to look into your work habits before he gives you the job and he'll ignore the personal relation that you two share.

Overall, what I am saying is that people with intelligent minds make better decisions than someone with a caring heart.

-C-Los, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Which one do you think you possess — a caring heart or an intelligent mind? Do you think those who disregard their feelings are also cheating themselves out of the beautiful things in life — like love and freedom?

To Be Intelligent

If I had to choose between intelligence and a caring heart, I would choose to be intelligent. Because I have a caring heart, and it won't get you everything you need.

I choose intelligence, because if you have intelligence — you can get work, go to college, have a good family, and know how to do it! If you are intelligent, you know how you could get a caring heart, and you'd know how to do anything with your head.

When you have intelligence, everybody's going to know it; and they're going to like you for it. And whenever they need you to do any kind of job or task, they'll give you a call.

I'd rather choose to be intelligent. It'll get you somewhere in your future — and you'll be somebody in life!

-Saktown, 150 Crew

From The Beat: There once was a very intelligent American philosopher named William James, and he argued much like you — that intelligence will lead you to develop and maintain a caring heart, if you just think things through in the right way. So what you say is pretty smart. But we see so many intelligent people think their way into doing stupid [uncaring] things, that we'd be the last to undervalue your caring heart, Sacramento!

Choices

If I had to choose between intelligence or a caring heart, I'd have to go with intelligence 'cause you can go far with that. You can get good jobs with intelligence and people won't try to play you or nothing. You can also go to college with intelligence. There's a lot of stuff that you can do with intelligence that you couldn't do if you were dumb.

I feel that a kind heart might slow you down a little bit 'cause people might take your kindness for a weakness and think you're soft or something and try to get over on you.

PS. You can have both and that's even better.

-Lil' E, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Do you think that having a kind heart can actually make you wise towards the way other people feel? Which quality do you think makes your life more complete?

My Life

my life was so bad
every day i'd think
just go out and kick it
and do bad things
like fight people
have guns
and also go and take cars
and ride them to a friend's house
also go and mess wit' girls
and also go and hurt people that
hate my homeboys
and me every time i'd hear
people say things about me or my homeboys
i'd get mad and i'd go and try to hurt them
but i don't like this life anymore
i'm going to change my life
and have fun in good ways
so i don't go to jail again and again

-Lil' Thai, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It's easy to say you won't let your anger take you away and have you doing foolish and destructive things that in the end will bring you back to lockdown. It's easy to say you're going to turn your life around. But it takes more than promises, it takes a plan and sticking to it. Be a man and do it.

Moms Pays The Highest Price

The loved one that is paying the most for my incarceration is my moms, because she get all sad an' stuff since I am the only child.

My dad doesn't really trip that much, 'cause he's always told me if I'm out there doing what I do, I better be ready for the unexpected. So when they take me back to the Hall, I'm ready for whatever — 'cause me and my homeboys were taught to stay on our toes and expect the unexpected at all times.

My moms cries when I'm away, but then again, she can at least sleep at night knowing I ain't running around these East Bay varrios.

-Yung Lazy, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Thanks for taking on the topic this week. We've been waiting a long time for you to speak on subject. And just as we'd expect, you are quite articulate. We just wish you could roll it back to "if I'm out there doing what I do" — then think that part through. 'Cause incarceration's not for you!

I Miss You

Damn, I wish I could talk to my girl. I ain't talked to her for like two-and-a-half months straight. We only communicate through letters. I see her at my court dates, but that's it. I miss her so much. I miss her voice and everything special about her.

We been with each other for a year. I love her more than anything in the world. More than anyone could ever imagine. She loves me just as much as I love her, she writes me every day. I got like 50 letters from her. I write her every day, too. I just wish I could at least talk to her, I miss her so much it hurts. I miss her so much — just as she misses me.

Stephanie, I want the whole world to know how much I love you and miss you. Thank you God for giving me the girl of my dreams.

-Lil' Ray, 150 Crew

From The Beat: If this girl were right next to you right now, what would you say to her? What will you do to make up for lost time with your lady? Why don't you send her a copy of this piece when it gets published?



Missing Out

I'm locked up, I'm held down,
Man, I'm missing out
The streets are crazy; the girls are thick,
Man I'm missing out
Prom is here but I can't even shout,
Man, I'm missing out
The window is blurry; the sun is out
Man, I'm missing out
My stomach growls but all I got is county food for my mouth
Man, I'm missing out
I love my family photo shots 'cause that's all I got
Man, I'm missing out
I miss my fam, I miss my son
but most of all I miss waking up to the sun
Man, I'm missing out
Sometimes bad stuff comes out my mouth
But I just know I'm missing out

-Boog Money, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Good writing. That's a part of incarceration — missing out. How does this experience affect you? Does it make you value your freedom more? If you were released today, what would you do differently on the outs?

Bless Me

Bless me for not going over the edge
Bless me for not cutting off my legs
Bless me for not drinking the tears you shed
Bless me for not claimin' blue or red
Bless me, bless me
Lord, please just bless me
But this is jail and fools be steady testin' me
But it's the Lord that holds me back
So I know he's just blessin' me
But why folks can't leave me be?
But I realize it's just the Lord testin' me
But I know that he's blessin' me
So when jail time starts to get rough
I look at my Bible and say
Bless me, bless me
Lord, please just bless me

-Boog Money, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We're glad you're able to remain calm in an environment filled with negativity. What advice would you give to those that just go ballistic when someone pisses them off? Keep yo' head up!

**Another thing that makes
me mad is when my
father drinks and goes
out gambling
and loses a lot of money.**

I'd Choose A Caring Heart

I would choose a caring heart, because I would give somebody my last dollar if they ask me. I have a caring heart. If I see someone doing bad to someone, I'll run over and try to help that person. I'll talk to someone if they look sad. I'll help old people carry their bags, cut their grass.

I'm not one of those people that will try and take from other people. Most of the times it's been good for me, but other times it hurt.

There was this lady who had me take something for her to a place, and then she tried to make it seem like I stole it. This woman was twenty-eight or twenty-nine, and I was fourteen. She was trying to take advantage of me.

-Ferguson, 150 Crew

From The Beat: A caring heart is important. It is a very powerful tool. Sometimes, as you mention, certain people may try and take advantage of you, but they must be unhappy people. Plus, a caring heart can change people around you and increase the quality of your life. Keep caring.

The System Is A Game . . .

I been playing this game since '98
sometimes you win,
sometimes you don't
but when you are a veteran like me
you act like you can pass every
level without bein' touched
then you die
(that's you getting caught)
then you go to the Hall,
that's the game loading
then you use your continue
(that's you getting out)
and now you're back in the game
now this time you try to do the right thing
because it's 2004 and
you running out of time
Then you jump too early,
now you die
you have no more continues
but your points add up and you thought it
was game over,
then them points give
you another continue
then that's object complete,
then you go find a harder game to play . . .
I will not lose

-Lil' Joey, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Clever writing. Chances and choices are always there to make and take. What do you think will be the harder game to play — the legit game? How do you see your future looking like if you don't change? You reap what you sow, what can you do to reap the benefits of freedom?

What Makes Me Mad

What makes me mad is when something don't happen the way I would like it, but I learned to control that. One thing that makes me and a lot of people mad is when you talk about their family or most of all, when someone messes with their family.

But the main thing is you have to know is how to control your anger or how to make smart decisions when you are angry. When I get mad, I try to think of happy memories and also pray. But a lot of times I make poor decisions in life and in that predicament.

Another thing that makes me mad is when my father drinks and goes out gambling and loses a lot of money. So my advice to the readers of this is when you get mad, just pray to God to take the anger away and leave the situation in his hands and he will take care of it. "Thank You and God Bless."

-Sonny, 150 Crew

From The Beat: There's nothing wrong with feeling angry, but as you say, it's what you do with it. Sometimes anger can be very hard to control. How does prayer help you get through your anger? How does having God in your life empower you? How would you convince a non-believer that there actually is a God?

**sometimes you win,
sometimes you don't**



Thoughts

I'm just sitting in max unit waiting for the judge to sentence me. I been here for over two months. I miss my mom and the rest of my family. I'm just real glad to know I at least got family who loves me and care about me.

I see a lot of people in here who don't got that, I just thank God for blessing me with my family. I can't wait to be free so I can show them all how much I love them and care for them; I just can't wait.

-Lil' Ray, 150 Crew

From The Beat: How do you plan on showing your family that you love them? How do you let them know that you're thinking of them? In the future, do you plan to raise your kids the way your family raised you?

Every Day

Every day I ask —
why did it have to be this way —
sitting in this jail in my little tiny cell.

Sitting here all alone.

Can't even use the phone.

I miss my Mom.

Why did I have to do wrong?

I'm waiting for placement.

Waiting to leave this nasty place.

One, two, three.

Back again.

Maybe this time it will be the end.

This system sucks.

All it wants is the bucks.

They're setting us up to fail
and keep us in jail.

And damn, we can't even make bail.

What kind of crap is that.

All I do is get fat.

I sit on my butt all day long
when I could be home with my Mom.

-Sandra, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: We know that you're asking questions you know the answers to. But at least you're asking them with "style". What can you do to get the life you want? Good luck!

Never Come Back

These days and times you gotta stay focused in life in order to be something. A lot of kids these days seem to like to be around a lot of other boys in a unit and wearing each other's underwear 'cause some people enjoy coming back and forth to jail. They seem to think that it's some kinda joke, but me, I rather be on the outs.

I came in for a violation and am on my way to camp. I hate it because I wish that I could go home.

I just want to say to all the young readers, don't get caught up 'cause the system will have you messed up, so it will be hard to do a lot of things that you're used to, 'cause you might go to jail and it could stop you from getting a good job.

I wish that I never got caught up, and when I get out, I'm gonna change 'cause this is not the life I want to lead for myself. So my plan is to stay out of jail.

-Ron-Ron, 150 Crew

From The Beat: That's a good plan. What is your strategy? Do you think that this is going to be hard to accomplish? What are some of the obstacles you are going to have to overcome?

High Price

The people who are paying the highest price for me being in here would have to be my whole family and my girl. They were affected by this 'cause they never thought that I would end up in jail, and also, 'cause it was about to be the holidays and we were all supposed to be together.

But I'm paying the highest price of them all 'cause I'm the one doing the time, but I'm also glad that it was me instead of them.

-Lil' Carlos, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Choices, choices and choices. Do you think that you will make better choices when you get out? What is the biggest lesson you've learned since you've been involved with the system?

Strong Heart

Would you rather have an intelligent mind or a caring heart? The truth with me is there is nothing wrong with having an intelligent mind 'cause everybody has that, but for me having a caring heart means a lot.

Having heart makes you a strong man. Caring for your family, putting in work, having that strong heart is when respect comes to you.

I'm Lil' E from the city of Hayward, and in my part of that city, you have to earn your respect, let people know you're on top of game. I'm saying forget the fame just let homies and people respect you by your name.

-Lil' E, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Why do you think people would choose intelligence over a caring heart? If you have both, will an intelligent mind stop you from caring for the wrong person? By the way, do you ever feel like "putting in

My Family

The time that I've spent here in Juvenile Hall has really made me think of my loving and caring family. Before, I didn't realize how much I missed my family. I used to just go out with my friends and spend time with them.

Now that I'm in here, I've come to my senses. My family should always be my first priority. I'm in here, and the only one who is here and cares for me is my family — not my friends.

-Karina, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: Sometimes it takes a difficult situation to make one realize what's most important in life. Just don't forget the lesson.

It's On The Wind

As I am right now, locked up
and watching TV in the Hall...

as I see the eyes of the others here,
it makes me think. I look at the map,
above the TV,
and think about what kind of mother I am.

I hear the wind now,
and listening to it makes me think
about what I need and what I am going to do
to change.

-Elise, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: Lovely poem Elise. Sounds like your stint in the Hall has made you do some soul searching. That's good. And acting on what you've learned is the next step.



Drop So Many Tears

We drop so many tears,
After all these years,
Sittin' here reminiscin'
On all the shhh we done
So I close my eyes
In 0.5 of a second y'all gone
So now I'm tryin' so hard
But I don't know if I could carry on
Now it's been two months now
And I'm so stressed out
That I didn't touch down at yo' funeral
So I keep writin' it over in my head
On my wall, damn, I'm so stressed out now
My ninjas die.

RIP to my loved ones, Lil' Mickey, Lil' C

-Lil' Molly, 150 Crew

From The Beat: What can you do to keep the memory of your loved ones alive? How can you save yourself from being involved in a similar tragedy? Have you learned anything from their deaths or did they all die in vain?

Makes Me Realize

I sit here in the Hall looking around, being indoors all day and not doing the things I wish I could do, on the outs. This is coming from my own word. Being in the Hall as a young mom is not easy as the days go by. Day by day I'm thinking of what I should have done and not done.

It makes me realize I don't want to come back. Because not having your son for two weeks puts you through a lot. Now I know that when I get out, I need to change my life — for my son and family. If not, I won't see my son or family any more.

-Elise, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: Elise, begin to focus on what you need to do to change. Wanting to change is one thing. But what does it mean? Think deeply about what you need to do. Make a list of the three most important things you can do to change your life. Carry the list with you and think about those things you have to do to stay out of the system.

Intelligent Mind

I would rather have an intelligent mind than a caring heart from my experience.

When I was little, I had a caring heart and would be cool to a lot of people. One day I let an older kid shoot "hoops" with me, and it was all-good at first. Then it was time to go and I asked for my ball back and the older kid ran off with my ball.

From then on, I had an intelligent mind, because nice people finish last in this society, doesn't matter what anybody says. With an intelligent mind I am more aware of who to trust. That's why I choose to have an intelligent mind.

-Big Samoa, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Do you think that if more people had caring hearts this society would be different? How would an intelligent mind help you in that situation? And what was it about having a caring heart that determined the outcome of that situation? If you had an intelligent mind back then, do you think you would still have your basketball?

Reading

I have been reading a lot of different books lately. I was locked up in another facility for two weeks and started to read. I started a good book on slavery.

It was about a girl who was born a slave, and a white girl. Both girls lost their parents and were living on a plantation owned by the white girl's dead parents. The white girl was named Katie and the slave girl's name was Mayme. They were also taking care of a little girl and another slave who had a baby.

They all lived together and they became a family.

-Gwynne, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: Good for you. Reading is the single most important part of becoming an educated person. Keep it up. Why did you like this book? Did you relate to any part of the book?

Why Do I Write?

I write because The Beat shows up.

I write to be a role model in this unit.

I write because I have to, I need to, I want to.

I write because I'm here.

I write because I'm bored.

I write because you say so.

I write because my program says it's time to.

I write because my feelings need to get out.

And since no one will listen, I jot them down.

-Sam, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: Write on, Sam. Write on! What is the best part about writing? If The Beat disappeared, would you stop writing?

When I

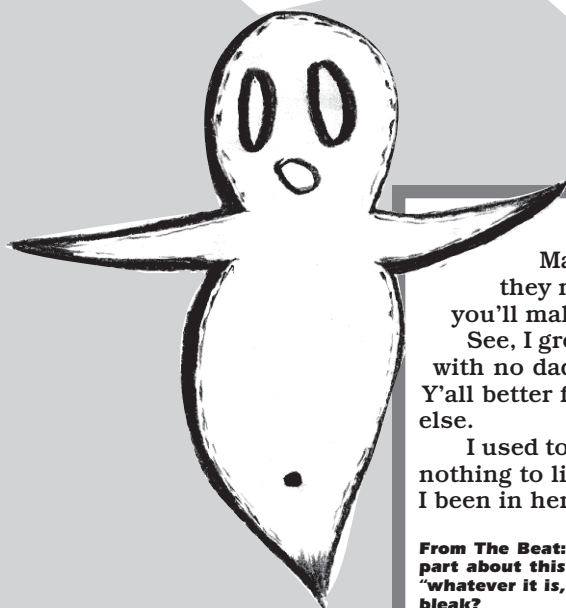
Man, the system is not a game, every time somebody come in jail, it's 'cause they make money. See young people, if you go to school and don't play games, you'll make real money.

See, I grew up in the 'hood, too, but don't let the 'hood be the reason. Growing up with no daddy is hard, so you got to find somebody to guide you in the right place. Y'all better find y'all some mentors. Be real with yourself; stop trying to be someone else.

I used to want to kill myself, I used to cry and hang myself because I thought I had nothing to live for. I had my family to live for on the outs, but in here — I just stress. I been in here for 9 months, but I fought a staff and I could have got seven years.

-Ray, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We all often feel that things are messed up and the world seems meaningless. The good part about this is that these feelings pass and there is a brighter day ahead. You've got to tell yourself, "whatever it is, I'll get through it." Do you have a mentor? Where do you find hope when the world seems bleak?





The Love Within

when i first saw you
i felt the love within
every time you hug me
kiss me and even rub me
i feel the love within
whenever we walk and talk
i can feel the love within
even though we argue
struggle and even fight
i still feel the love within
even when we was
in our homeless situation
i felt the love within
when i was pregnant
with your baby
and did not know what to do
you was there to hold me
when i was crying
because i was confused
and didn't know what to do
i felt the love within
now that we are in different places
i still feel the love within
even though i'm in pain
because i'm not with you
i still feel the love within
even though we can't hold each other
and laugh off the hard times
i still feel the love within
even though i can't play
with your dreads
and hold your hand
and touch your soft beautiful skin
i still feel the love within
i feel the love within
the love within
this is dedicated to my best friend
fuddie-bo

-Laquisha, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This poem is full of tenderness, honesty, sadness, love, and intimacy. We know our readers will feel what you write about so delicately. Through all confusion and pain, true love will survive to blossom when better days come again.

Maybe

Maybe if I was not so mad at the world I could have a good life.
Maybe if I was at home I could help my moms, and be a good son.
Maybe if I would have went to school and did more at home.
Maybe if I was more about getting rid of this ninja, they would not have anything to say.
Maybe if I had a lot of money, she would like me.
Maybe I should kick it with you, so people could like me more.
Maybe I need this car to be down.
Maybe if I could play ball like you.
Maybe if I could cash out on everything that you see.
Or maybe if I was more like you.

-D-Moe, 150 Crew

From The Beat: All your maybes are possible. Why are you so mad at the world and how can you make peace with it and yourself? It sounds like money is a big theme and you think you got to have a lot of it for someone to like you. Stay away from those females. A cool single female, who is a good match for you, would want stability, a good person and like you for you.

Maybe if I was not so mad at the world I could have a good life.

El Cambio De Mi Vida

Creo que el quien está siendo afectado por mi encarcelación soy yo y estoy haciendo afectado bastante porque voy a tener que regresarme a México. También he sido afectado porque al regresarme aqui he perdido mi trabajo que tenía. Lo más impotante que perdi el cariño y confianza que tenía de mi familia y eso para mí es muy importante.

En en la otra mano, haber venido aqui me ha hecho a abrir los ojos y también me ha hecho ver que la vida no es facil. Me ha hecho pensar lo que realmente quiero, y quien realmente soy. Yo pienso que todo lo que he hecho esta mal. Lo único que sé es que mi vida sigue y todavía me falta más por vivir y más por aprender.

Ahora voy a tratar de seguir con mi vida en México y voy a tratar de ser lo mejor que pueda. También voy ayudar a mis padres y voy a tratar de darme a querer de nuevo. Ahora voy a tratar positivamente, y lo único que dire es que la regue. La verdad es que siento que perdí una gran parte de mi vida.

From The Beat: Si amigo, esperamos que todo salga bien, acuerdate que las cosas no son iguales allá. Recuerda como esta la situación allá y que allá las cosas no son juegos. ¿Sabemos que has perdido muchas cosas con todo esto, pero nos gustaria saber como le harás para confrontar todas estas metas? Mucha suerte amigo, y que no se te olvide volver a trompezarte con la misma piedra.

The Change Of My Life

I think the one most affected by my incarceration is me. I'm being affected a lot because I'm going to go back to Mexico. My work is also being affected, because coming back here again has made lose my job I had. The most important thing I've lost is the affection and the trust I had from my family, and for me, that's very important.

On the other hand, coming in here has made me open my eyes and made me realize that life is not easy. It has made me think of the things I really want, and who I really am. I think all I've done has been bad. All I know is that this life continues and I still have a lot more to live and more to learn.

Now I'm going to try to deal with my life in Mexico and try to do my best. I'm also going to help my parents and let myself be appreciated by them again. Now, I'm going to try to do things positively, and all I'm going to say from now and on is that I messed up. The truth is that I feel I've lost a big part of my life.

-José, Marin

BEAT
WITHIN
IT'S THA
BEAT



Ashamed

I am ashamed of being in here.
I am ashamed of not being out there with my son
and not being a Mom to him.
I am ashamed of seeing my Mom at court —
her youngest one and me, the other.
I am ashamed at seeing myself like this in here.
I am ashamed of thinking ahead all the time and not knowing what is going on.
I am ashamed of not knowing what my boyfriend is doing — thinking all the time
that he is not going to change.
But most of all I am ashamed when I look at myself and ask myself what kind
of mother am I, and what could I have done besides being in here.

-Elise, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: Time now to move beyond your shame, Elise. Time now to consider how you will change your behavior so you don't end up away from your child again.

**Maybe
after
this is
all over,
I can
move
on with
my life
and be**

Ashamed

I'm ashamed of what I've done.
I'm ashamed of the choice I made to get drunk.
I'm ashamed for leaving with him.
I'm ashamed for what I did.
I'm so ashamed, but he'll never know.
I just hope he would read this, and know
how much I'm ashamed.

-Jessica, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: A bit of shame can be healthy, but too much shame is extra weight on your back. The important thing is not to repeat the behavior that causes you to feel ashamed.

The World

the world is filled with life
in the world there are animals
such as lions tigers snakes
and lots more plus
there are humans that work
for money to buy food
and clothing for themselves
to keep them warm
also there are
different medications
for different diseases
such as colds fevers chicken
pox
and sexually transmitted
diseases
there are drugs in the world
too, like
weed dope crack
cocaine and marijuana
which destroy
your brain cells
well that's it

-Kenneth, 150 Crew

From The Beat: The world can seem like an awfully mixed up place, especially when you get lost in a drugged haze. But the world can seem simple, too, if you just do what you need to do.

Sanity

Sanity in my world is something not seen or heard of very much. If you start out with it, you better hold on tight or you will lose it quick. I had sanity once, and I decided it wasn't that important to keep around. And now it's all I want and I can't seem to find it anywhere.

For a long time now I've lived without sanity, thinking I was just fine and didn't really need it. Boy, I was wrong. I guess that's what landed me here — lack of sanity and not knowing where to look to get it back.

Reality today is hard to deal with, especially if you want to have a normal existence. If I could go back, I'd hold on to my sanity and hold on for dear life, and fight anyone who tried to take it from me. Because, trust me, once you lose it, it's a hard shell to find again.

-Ashley, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: Hey, you sound pretty sane to us. Maybe we have a different definition. But what we hear you saying is that it's tough to get back on the right track. OK, maybe it is tough. But you're smart. You have to want it, though. Do you really want it?

Like Years, But Only A Day

Being in Juvenile Hall makes a day feel like years. It makes my dreams feel like they are gone.

The motion of the car last night still feels real.

In the room they have me in, all I can do is look out the window.

The thought of my parents being angry makes me upset.

I have faith that when I go to court it won't be so bad.

I know the policeman who saw the accident will be there to testify against me.

I wish I could turn back time and do that day over again.

Now I'm in here, and it doesn't feel good.

Maybe after this is all over, I can move on with my life and be successful.

I'm still young and I can learn from my mistakes.

-Karina, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: Yes, we think you'll have learned a lot from this experience. Most of us learn by making mistakes. It becomes a problem if we don't learn from them. Just remember your stay in Juvy the next time you're tempted to do something wrong.





Weed Saved My Life

One day I was so upset at the world I had just caught some horrifying news. I had just heard my brother got murdered by his girlfriend — shot six times in the chest and once in the face with a 9 mm. He passed away at the hospital in Chicago a few hours later. The disappointing thing is he got murdered over a petty argument because he supposedly cheated on his girlfriend.

So when I was riding with my OG patna, I received the news of my half black Puerto Rican brother Jamal. As we arrived to downtown Oakland from San Francisco we pulled up to the par'lot of a restaurant. We decide' to pull ova, get something to eat. As we pull in and found the parking space where we were heading in the parking slot, the black Mercedes Benz stole the spot like a bat in the night. An' he got out of his car with this cocky smile and laughin' at me and my associates. Meanwhile in my head I had been thinking of bad thoughts about my brother's girlfriend.

I get out of the car in a fierce rage. With the desert eagle in my claws. I point it to his head. He immediately wipes the smirk off his face and start to get that fear in his eyes that I have seen so many times before.

He cries out, "wait don't shoot!"

My associate immediately run' to me in a calm voice, he says, "brother give me the gun. It's not worth it. Take this instead." I pause for a minute and think about the consequences. He hands me a fat blunt filled with that green herb I love so much.

I say, "it cool but dude don't you ever disrespect anybody like that!" The scared white male backs back to his Benz and skirted off. We pull in the parking space. I chill out. Take a fat pull of the green leaf herb and relax.

The story I told you happened a few days before I got incarcerated. As I've been reflecting on it, I chose the right way. Weed saved my life. What saved yours?

-Jeremy, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This story is deep. When you hear that you lost a person that you love it always hurts. Some of us here have even done things like you. We know how to talk about it and write about it. That's what saves our lives. You were right though, weed did save your life that day. But it didn't seem to keep you out of juvy. We understand that some use weed to calm themselves. It's up to you to continue doing this, but we would strongly suggest you figure out additional ways to deal with your anger. Weed obviously isn't enough for you. What about anger management classes, books about dealing with anger, writing like you do or talking it out with someone that is more peaceful, wise and level-headed?

What Makes You Mad

Disrespect makes me maddest of all. Also in our culture the way the laws are made up also makes me mad. When your women and yourself are walking and a dude comes up and grabs her butt and says something rude and you mess him up you get arrested. There are thousands of other situations like that and they end up the same way.

Back in my parents days there were less murder because fighting didn't have a steep charge and harsh punishment. Now our society is throwing the book at minor violence and ruining people's lives forever. That makes me from mad to angry.

-James, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You mention some things that make us mad too. It's a difficult world and sometimes we make it more difficult. How do you think you make things harder for yourself and others? As far as heavy charges for violence and it ruining the lives of the offender, what about the victim? What are some alternatives to a harsh punishment that will be the best for both parties?

Stuck

Layin' in my cell, can't wait to go home needing someone to talk to, wishin' to use the phone, and it really be on 'cause I can't stand the sound of Big Watts' voice. But I guess causing havoc and robbing ninjas was my own choice. Now I'm eating a dinner that I call an appetizer, so I eat hella bread & drink milk, 'cause moms always taught me to be a survivor. Now I'm stuck in max unit surrounded by a bunch of J-cats. Some weak, and most are snitches. So I'm guessing it can't get any worse than that, and last but not least, a whole lot of haters. I can't stand haters, can you?

Maybe, I don't know but take a strong hit of some grapes and blow the smoke, but now this shhh ain't the spirit. I've been here one time too many, and I really know I'm not coming back here no more. For one, I'll be eighteen on July 25th and on top of that, I'm through. I have a couple of goals I have to get accomplished.

But to all of the readers I'ma tell you like I tell my folks, leave it to us youngstas an' the hall will never go broke. So these staff and directors go broke, you feel? I'm gone, but I'm going to tell y'all what my big brother to' me. (He's in Folsom with a sentence of fifty years flat.) He tells me to "always keep my sucka free repellent spray on because they come around like fleas and ticks, feel me?" "It's nothing to it but to do it Leroy."

-Emmy-Boe, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Thanks for keeping it real, Emmy-Boe. We know that you and your family are/were in this life but it's also important to do what you did here and admit how you feel about it all. This takes guts and not too many can take their masks off. Everyone needs someone to talk to, whether it's a mentor, a family member or even talking through prayer. Keep talking to The Beat and anyone else who will listen. Remember haters hate because they are feeling bad about themselves and their lives so they try to take it out on someone, so if anything, feel sorry for them and don't hate back. What goals do you want to accomplish? We are sorry about your big brother facing so much time. You have much of your life to live after your time. There are many transition programs out there you can utilize when you get out, like The Beat Within, The Mentoring Center and more. Until then, educate yourself, keep writing, and keep discovering the person in you who wants a better life. He's always been there.

My Family And Me, Pay

my family is paying the price
'cause they missing
and worrying about me
and it's not good
to have your family
worrying about you
you' supposed to make
your family happy
and you should have intelligence
and have events your family goes to
so they could show the good things
they know and say about you
and i don't like coming to the hall
'cause i'm paying the price also
and i don't know if i can stop
making my family mad

-Aubert, 150 Crew

From The Beat: If your family gets mad 'cause of some of the things that you do, then it is strictly up to you quit acting a fool trying to be something you're not. Get out the game! You don't need the pain. It's always too hot on the spot if you keep coming back to being locked up.



Getting Room Time For Being Bad

"Don't trip" is what she say.
"It's only an hour out of your day,"
Minute by minute I sit and wait.
When I get out, life will be great
Or so I believe.
But who cares, I just want to leave,
I hate this place, stuck in my room,
I feel like a mummy locked in my tomb,
I will feel dead until my release,
Steady, staying away from police.

-Ashley, 150 Crew

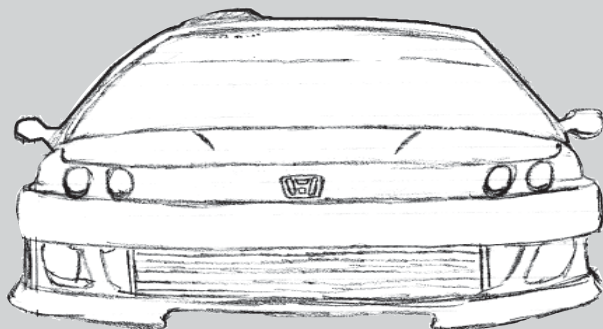
From The Beat: Nice flow; you really capture juvenile hall thoughts. Life is never only great — but a mix of great and not-totally great is fair. What can you do to make the kind of life you want a reality and not just a dream? By the way, if you're living cool, you won't even need to trip about police.

Enemy Of The Bay

I'm in a world of hate.
It can't get any better,
So now all I do is wait.
I used to have a death wish,
But now I don't even care,
Because my life is what I've made it.
Some people only see what they want to see,
But beyond that, there's a whole other me.
I dislike my mother,
Wish my father was here to protect me,
From pain and tears.
I ask the question "why?" on a daily,
But I'm starting to feel untouchable,
If anyone thinks I'm a punk,
Then I'll just have to let them know.
Don't play with me,
Because I'm not a toy,
If you get a laugh from playing with my feelings,
I'm 'a write a mad poem and go so dumb wit' it.
Therefore, I'm nobody's puppet,
So quit testing me,
And put ya pride in a bucket,
Then drive it off into the bay,
Because your bad luck,
Just began today.

Brittany, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Brittany, why do you call yourself "Enemy of the Bay"? You feel like you're in a world of hate. Where is this hate coming from? Do people hate on you? You really touch people with your words. There are a lot of people out there, that can relate to what you're going through. Your life is what you made it, but that only proves that you have the power to change you life. What is the most important thing in your life? What gives your life meaning?



Being Stressed

I'm sittin' here in my room,
Stressed out,
You ask, "What about?"
I'm trapped behind these walls,
I'm stuck thinkin' 'bout it all,
This is a big downfall,
My sisters is homeless now,
'Cause we had to put a ninja in his place,
I'm in the Hall,
So that's a disgrace,
I don't believe in God, so don't tell me to have faith,
I'm getting' mad and takin' out my anger,
On the ones that really care,
My cousin went to intake I feel like,
That ain't fair,
Somebody please get me the hell out of here
Before I pull out all my hair,
Being stressed.

-Da Real Lil' Mama, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Lil' Mama, you really stepped up with this piece. This is powerful. Being stressed ain't nothing nice, especially when you can't help those you're stressing about. How can you deal with your situation without going crazy? Do writing, crying, reading, exercising, help? You don't have to believe in God to have faith; you can have faith in yourself. What do you hope happens, and what can you do to help it happen?

About My Lifestyle

Hi, my name is Sharetta and I'm here to tell you about the life I lived while I was younger. I am seventeen now and I'll be eighteen soon.

When I was a baby, I didn't have no parents at all. When I was fifteen, I got pregnant and had him at sixteen, and also, back 2000 to 2002, I was raped and molested. And when it happened, I didn't know what to do. All I could do is cry.

And when I was two I got took from my mom by CPS, and until now I am still in the system, until 18 years.

-Sharetta, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Wow, Sharetta, you've had a rough life. How do you deal with these things now that you are older? Have you been able to talk to anyone about your rape? Do you have a lot of anger? Where is your baby now? What kind of advice would you give someone going through what you went through?

Do You Know What It Feels To Be Me?

Do you know how it feels to be me?
No, I don't think so.
I've been raped.
I remember the night I screamed,
No! Please let me go.
Do you know how it feels to be me?
No, I don't think so.
So don't judge me by what you hear,
Because you see all my tears.
Do you know how it feels to be me?
No, I don't think so, stay away from me,
And don't come near.

-Voniesha, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Voniesha, this is a really powerful and tragic piece. We don't know how it feels to be you, but we'd like to know more. Do you know what it feels like to be us? We feel how you might want people to stay away from you after you've been hurt, but if you let people in, near you, then they can understand more about you. Maybe there is someone out there who can relate to you and your experiences. Relationships are the best way to grow, sharing common and new experiences. What do you think?



It's Not All Right

what makes me mad
is that i am only fifteen years old
in juvenile hall for the first time
and it's hard
what makes me mad
is that i was so stupid
as to go with my friends
who said they were my friends
and blame everything on me
what makes me mad
is that i have to wake up
every morning for two or three months
to four white walls
and staff telling me what to do
what makes me mad
is that i was just
at the wrong place
at the wrong time
with the wrong friends
who told me i was going to be all right
but it's not all right
that's what makes me mad

-Mike, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You should be mad, at yourself as well as your so-called friends. But being mad won't mean a thing unless you decide to bring that energy to the difficult task of changing your playmates, playgrounds and playthings — or it will go wrong all over again. Keep your head up and don't let up.

What Makes Me Mad

What makes me mad is
me being in my room being sad.
What makes me mad is
having to cry tears every night.
What makes me mad is
me not having my family in my sight.
What makes me mad is
having one dead sister and two dead brothers.
What makes me mad is
I can't go no further.
What makes me mad is
I feel like I don't have a mother.
What makes me mad is
my life, because I am not living it right.
What makes me mad is
things I don't got I was wishing I had.
What makes me mad is
being the one with the downfalls.
What makes me mad is
being locked behind these four walls.

-Voniesha, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Voniesha, all these things that make you mad are really sad experiences. Why do you think we get mad when our feelings are hurt? Is there another way to deal with these feelings? What makes you happy?

What makes me mad is having one dead sister and two dead brothers.

My Family And Me, Pay

my family is paying the price
'cause they missing
and worrying about me
and it's not good
to have your family
worrying about you
you supposed to make
your family happy
and you should have intelligence
and have events your family goes to
so they could show the good things
they know and say about you
and i don't like coming to the hall
'cause i'm paying the price also
and i don't know if i can stop
making my family mad

-Aubert, 150 Crew

From The Beat: If your family gets mad 'cause of some of the things that you do, then it is strictly up to you quit acting a fool trying to be something you're not. Get out the game! You don't need the pain. It's always too hot on the spot if you keep coming back to being locked up. You can stop if you try and want to stop and get the support you need.

**i don't know
if i can stop
making my
family mad**

Las Drogas Me Controlan

Lo que yo he intentado aveces es de quitarme la vida por puras tonterías que he cometido. Yo pensaba que podía domirar la droga pero la droga me domina a mí.

Yo empecé a fumar cristal una vez a la semana pero después me pasaron cosas que me hicieron sentirme mal y me hicieron usar más.

Ahora siento que no puedo para de hacer drogas. Esto no se lo deseo a nadie porque las drogas es una cosa adicta, que puede estar en cualquier lado el mundo. Espero que me ayuden a salir de esto. No me canso de pedir ayuda porque me gustaría cambiar mi vida a otra nueva vida.

From the Beat: Esperamos que busques ayuda que te saque de todo este problema de drogas. No es bueno andar en estas cosas, puedes perder toda tu vida en esto. Solo mira a las cosas que te ha llevado. ¿Hay alguien en tu vida quien te pueda ayudar en esto? ¿Crees que podrás hacerlo por ti mismo?

Drugs Control Me

What I tried to do is to take my life away due to all the stupidities I've committed. I thought I was able to control drugs, but the truth is that drugs control me.

I started using crystal once a week, but later a lot of things happened that made me feel bad and do more.

Now I feel that I can't stop using drugs. I don't want this to happen to anyone because drugs is something addictive, which could be anywhere in the world. I hope someone helps me get out of this. I don't get tired of asking for help because I would like to change my life to a new life.

-Erika, San Luis Obispo



Contemplation

i'm the commander of this ship
yet i still can't see where i'm going
eyes wide shut
lost in my own mind
why must i fight
when i'm the only one left
you think i'm crazy
you must think i'm crazy
don't sit there and lie to me
how can you say you don't
when i think it of myself
i try to relax and let stuff go
try to be calm and serene
when it's more like wrestling
books with no titles
people with no faces
names with no meaning
america is lovely isn't it
this hell we call a system
trapped and surrounded by freedom
all in my brain

-Sarkastix, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Crazy? Yes; you could call it crazy, in the sense that self-destructive behavior is crazy. But what we see is a young man so full of passion that he swings out of control. It takes practice, to find that instant between the impulse to strike out and the striking out itself; to find that moment and put yourself on pause — put the act on pause, but not the feeling. Let the feeling in; put yourself on pause during its visit; and then when it's ready to go, let it. "Just let go" makes no sense at all, till you've practiced this more than a few times. Keep your head up.



Redirect My Anger

Lots of things make me mad. When people push me around and make fun of me, I get mad. When I'm doing bad in school, when I'm not respected and when I'm lonely, when people strike me, I get mad.

I need to direct my anger through another channel, which is less troublesome and hurtful.

-Sean, Marin

From The Beat: How can you let someone know you don't appreciate being dissed, and that they can stop it right now, without dissing them? That's when you get real respect!

Why Lie?

i see your face
full of disgrace
boy i tell you
you'll never be my taste
not one word from your mouth
can be trusted
your heart is an open grave
you can't even act brave
with your tongue
you speak deceit
but your words
don't get to me
they don't even touch me
you seem to speak them
constantly
with velocity
but to me
they're ungainly
what you don't seem
to understand
is that you're not
goin' to make it
in the world
full of lies
those you despise
ain't goin' to let you
waste their time
but regardless
i'm still goin' to
get mine
but may i ask you
why lie?

-Tyresha, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You give him a tongue-lashing, but not just to be smashing. Seems like you want him to learn his old ways will just get him burned. But new or old, you won't let his words turn you from the road you follow — to happiness and success! When your life starts changing, your choice of guys will too. Focus on yourself and the rest will follow.

Can't Leave

i don't like to get visitors
because i don't like seeing
my mom leave and
i can't leave with her

-Davaé, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It is a terrible and painful moment. But her love remains with you and can help you through.

Paying The Price

I think me, my brother, sister, my parents; I think we are all paying the price in some way. I am, for getting myself in here, and everyone else in my family is, too, by having me have to be here.

I know they don't want me in here. I feel bad for what I did. They feel bad for sending me here. We are all paying — they are, I am, we all are, in our own way.

-Sean, Marin

From The Beat: Since you know that many people are affected by your crime, what will you do to make sure that you save them and yourself from some serious heartache?

Algún Día

Abandonado en este cuarto, triste y
desolado
Esperando el día
Que pueda ver a mi hija
Y a su Hermosa madresita
El dolor me está matando
Y en lágrimas me estoy desahogando
El dolor que traigo en el pecho
No me está dejando respirar
Por un momento de emoción
Me quitaron mi libertad
Pero no pierdo las esperanzas
Que un día voy a salir
Y que voy a cambiar.
Lo voy hacer por ti.
I love you, Destiny.

From The Beat: No te desespere mucho Chiquilin, primero Dios todo te salga bien y llegues a ver a tus seres queridos que tanto quieres. Sabes que siempre estaremos aqui para escuchar tus palabras y escuchar tu desahogo. Sabes bien, que algún día saldras, y recuerda estos momentos para que te ayuden.

Some Day

Abandoned in this room, sad, and full
of grief
Waiting for the day
When I'll be able to see my daughter
And her beautiful mother
The pain is killing me
And I'm drowning in tears
The pain that I have in my chest
Is not letting me breath
Because of one moment full of
emotion
I had my freedom taken away from me
But I do not lose hope
Because I know one day I will get out
And I am going to change.
I'm going to do it for you.
I love you, Destiny.

-Chiquilin, 150 Crew

**When people push
me around and make
fun of me, I get mad.**



El Castigo

Un día más con este castigo
No te puedo ver mi hermoso angelito
Te amo y te quiero aunque no esté contigo
Mis días son amargos
Si supieras cuanto te extraño
Pero en mi corazón
Siempre te traigo
Si supieras escuchar y hablar
Te diría muchas cosas
Que amo a tu mama sobre todas las cosas
Las amo y las extraño,
Mis hermosas mariposas.

From The Beat: Que castigo tan grande querer y no poder estar con las personas que uno ama. Verdad Chiquilin, se nota que te está golpeando muy duro esta situación. Sabes amigo, te salen muy buenos tus poemas, porque vienen de muy adentro.

The Punishment

Another day with this punishment
I cannot see you my beautiful angel
I love you and I love you even though I may not be
with you
My days are bitter
If only you knew how much I missed you
But I always carry you
Inside of my heart
If only you could hear and speak
I would tell you many things
Like I love your mother above anything else
I love her and miss her
I love you both, my beautiful butterflies.

-Chiquilin, 150 Crew

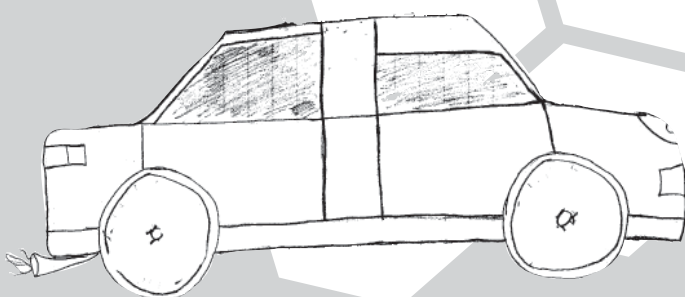
If You Have A Caring Heart, You Have Intelligence

If I had to choose between having an intelligent mind or a caring heart, I would choose a caring heart, because if you have a caring heart, it means you have intelligence.

Ya have to know what you are caring for, because — if you don't, you don't really, truly, sincerely care about whatever or whoever you care about...

-Sean

From The Beat: You're right; you can also have intelligence within your caring heart. Do you think it's possible that an intelligent mind can help keep you from being played or burned, if you care about someone so much that you can't see that they don't love you back, or are trying to play you?



Even By Fire

Fleeing shadows with tattered wings
A misfit in your palace of pretty things
In heaven it snows soft and white
Conjuring hell storms when I take flight
Into this dark world of flames I'll fall
I'll wait an eternity for you to call
Ugh! I realize there never existed a desire
Only a cold heart that couldn't be melted
Even by fire

-The Antichrist, Marin

From The Beat: You should be nobody's misfit. If someone values his palace of pretty things more than you, then you need your incredible talent and uniqueness more than you need him. Don't wait one second for him to call. Just be glad you won't become one of his pretty things. Can you find someone with a warm heart, like your own?

Tú Eres Mi Todo

Tú eres mi inspiración para vivir
Y mi alegría para reir
Tu nombre me motiva día tras día
Si no te tubiera no sé lo que haría
Ahora me doy cuenta que sin tí, me moriría
En mi corazón te traigo
Aunque me encuentre encerrado
Los días van pasando
Y más te estoy amando
Yo quiero estar contigo, lo estoy lamentando
Con dolor en el alma estoy llorando
Si pudiera darte un beso
Y encontrar una palabra para decirte todo
Lo que siento
Pero recuerda que tú eres el lucero
Más bello de todo el cielo.
Y la flor más bella del jardín
Aunque no este contigo,
Daddy se acuerda de ti
Te amo, Destiny.

From The Beat: Que poeta te nos volvistes amigo, que no. No deje que ese lucero se te pase rapido y no te des cuenta hasta que ya sea demaciado tarde. Sabemos que esto te debe de estar matando internamente amigo. Pero sabes, estamos seguro que algún dia tendrás esa oportunidad de decirles esas palabras a esta persona en persona.

You Are My Everything

You're my inspiration for living
And the joy that makes me laugh
Your name motivates me day after day
If I did not have you, I don't know what I'd do
Now I realize that without you I would die
I carry you inside of my hurt
Even though I find myself locked up
The days are passing by
And I love you more every day
I want to be with you. I'm regretting not being with you
I cry with much pain in my soul
If I could give you a kiss
And find one word that would tell you what I feel,
But remember that you are the most beautiful, bright star
Out of all the ones that are in heaven
And the most beautiful flower in the garden
Even though I may not be with you
Daddy remembers you
I love you, Destiny.

-Chiquilin, 150 Crew



Emotion Closing In!

Have you ever had that notion
That all of your emotion
Just won't stop closing in?
And you see it
And you feel it
And you know it
But can't control it?
And it just explodes
And you know it won't stop
'Til the pulse drops
And you feel it burnin'
And hurtin'
And you know it's curtains
When you're thrown down
Face in the ground
As you go another round
With the cops on the street
Walkin' the beat
Now they got their straps out
And now you can't shout
With a gun in your mouth
So it's over
Bar no holds
As your blood runs cold
And you feel it in your soul
And you just explode
And you feel it burnin'
An hurtin'
And you know it's curtains
When your friends start skirtin'
All the birds stop chirpin'
All you hear is the gun blast
And fall on your ass
The pain won't last
Because it's over

-Conrad, Marin

From The Beat: Where do you get your amazing ideas for your poem and your incredible images? Have you personally been through anything like this, when you thought the police were going to shoot you, or do you just have a huge, wild imagination? Or both? Another great piece!

one time me and a few of my friends were just walking down the sidewalk to the local supermarket to get some food. We were about twenty yards from the place, when a local police car screeched in front of us, cutting us off.

"What the hell did we do?" I thought to myself, as the cop jumped out his car.

"Get up against the car!" he shouted, like he had just witnessed us doing something illegal.

Five seconds later, one more screeched. "What did we do, officer?" my friend asked.

"Don't talk," he screamed at us as he kicked my legs apart and twisted my arm up behind my head. One by one he searched us thoroughly and found nothing. After sitting on the curb of the street for almost forty-five minutes, his radio shouted, "We found the suspect who was tagging on a school!"

-Spencer, Marin

From The Beat: Everyone makes mistakes. Did you have to suffer the repercussions of the cop's mistake? Did the matter ever get cleared? Why do you think that he pointed the finger at you? Do you believe that a lot of times, innocent people are caught for other people's crimes?

Me Siento Arrepentido

Bueno, como ya saben, yo estoy aqui por ser un vago y por hacer estupideces. Este vato se está arrepintiendo por todas las cosas que ha hecho antes y está pagando por las maldades que estuvo haciendo. Ahora estoy pagando las consecuencia, y no solo eso sino que mi familia también esta pagando las consecuencias.

También mi novia está más preocupada que todos y eso me hace sentir mal. Por todo esto, voy a tratar de hacer menos desmadres y dejar de andar con un chingo de haina, porque me puede traer un chingo de consecuencias.

Espero que esto lo mantengan en mente y presente. Mirenme ahora, que estoy en grandes líos por querer ser un pimp y un pandillero.

Un consejo: si uno tiene una jaina, no la engañen, y no juegues con otra ruca.

From The Beat: Entendemos que quieras cambiar, pero porque dices que vas a tratar de hacer menos desmadres. Si vas a cambiar, debería de hacerlo de una sola vez, sin hacer pequeños o grandes desmadres. Acuerdate que uno empieza haciendo cositas hasta cuando terminan haciendo cosotas que lleban a uno a la cárcel o otros lugares no deseados. ¿Ahora dinos, que bueno te ha traído haber sido un pimp y un pandillero?

I Feel Regretful

Well, like you know, I'm in here for being a fool and for doing stupid things. This fool is sorry for all the things he has done before and he's paying for all the bad things that he was doing. Now I'm paying the consequences, and not just that, but my family is also paying the consequences.

Also, the person that's worried the most about me is my girlfriend, and that makes me feel bad. Because of all that I am going through, I am going to try to stop doing so many dumb things and stop cheating with a lot of girls because if I continue, it will bring me consequences.

I hope that everyone keeps this in mind and in the present. Look at me now: I'm in deep trouble for wanting to be a pimp and a gangster.

Word of advice: If someone has a girlfriend, don't deceive her and don't play on her with another female.

-Little Droopy B4, SF/YGC

Thankful

Whenever I seem to be feeling up, it always seems to all fall down. I've been here oh so long, I feel like I won't be able to make it. I hate it here, feeling down in the dumps, like I can't go on.

Then I think to myself, it could all be worse. I could be only 17 doing 25 to life, or I could be sitting in CYA without visits at all and one hour out of my room a day.

But I'm here, here in the Hall doing 107 days. That's nothing, nothing at all. I should be really grateful and thankful that that I'm able to get out of bed in the morning and I have a warm bed to sleep in. I have a roof over my head, and I get treated when I'm sick.

Yeah, I admit it sucks being in here. But I did the crime, so I'm stuck doing the time. I know that some day I'll get out and be free. But until then I'll try and keep my head up and think about better days.

-Kimberly, San Luis Obispo

From The Beat: Thanks for the spreading the positivity. When did you start thinking positively so you could turn this ugly situation upside down, and see it isn't so bad? That attitude helps you get through rough times, right? How else has that attitude helped you? With friends? Family? Getting a job? Can it help you stay on the outs?



It's Pretty Lame

I think the system is pretty lame. I mean, if I were a probation officer, I would give my kids more chances to prove themselves, that they can live in a society without committing a crime.

These PO's are sending kids to group homes and out-of-state placements. I think getting sent away just makes a he or she angry, and then they will either run away or go and commit another crime. I also think some POs just don't really care. But there are some good POs.

All I got to say is I think the system won't change, so that's why we as young adults need to change before it's too late. Please keep your head. Better days are coming, homie.

-Marc, San Luis Obispo

From The Beat: Wise words. Lots of people complain about being sent away from their homes, and say they would do better there, but if things were good at home, why did you get into trouble in the first place? Is there anything the system could do to help kids do better at home? What will it take for you to get out of the system for good?

A Soul That's Pure

My wrists with scratches and scars,
insanity as I sit behind these bars.

Tears of questions that I never asked 'bout,
until I was led through the cell door.

Feeling trapped and alone,
praying for answers and a way home.

Realizing that my actions led me here,
that I am weak and my direction God needs to steer.

Looking for a place to turn,
belong to someone who loves me, I yearn
to feel happy without using or needing a drug,
feeling joy with a kiss or hug.

I pray for a soul that's pure,
I don't to wonder anymore, I want to be sure.

-Elizabeth, San Luis Obispo

From The Beat: Have you found any answers? Do you have any places and people you can turn to? Can you turn inside yourself for strength? Do you pray or meditate? Listen to music? What besides hurting yourself helps you find peace?

Through A Foggy Pyrex

I used to see my dreams through a foggy Pyrex
Now all I can think about are my stupid mistakes

Damn, these days have been rough

Especially being away from the ones I love

Looking at the cinderblock walls

Wondering when it's going to be time to get out of the Hall

I worry how my jefita feels

Hoping this time when I get out, I can keep it real

My mom asked me, "Don't you think it's worth anything?"

I say, "Hell, yeah, it's worth everything"

So I hope the judge will change his mind

If he doesn't, I guess you'll be seeing another rhyme

I also want to get back to my girl

'Cause she's my everything in my world

-Osito, Marin

From The Beat: Your ladies want you home, Osito. If you want them to be happy, you know the way to do it. You wanna be there for them, be there. And don't worry about your days, better days will arrive when you get out and start doing things right.

What Makes Me Mad

Recently I was involved in a fight with my twenty-year-old brother, who still lives at home. He wouldn't stop provoking me, so I stepped up and socked him in his face. He fell to the ground, got up, went into the kitchen and got two butcher knives with the blade on each at least eight inches long. As soon as I saw him grab the knives, I bounced out the front door and hopped the fence to the school across the street from my house. Once my brother got to the fence, he gave up.

Later I returned to my house, as he was leaving in his Toyota Tercel, he tried to hit me with his car. After he missed, he backed up and tried to run me over again. What a crazy guy!

I got locked up one to two weeks after that incident. My brother works at Blockbuster Video in Novato. I heard from someone that he's been telling random people about my business and going to the Hall. Also, he's decided to say that I chased him with knives. Shhh!

That pisses me off! I can't do anything about it or confront him. I asked my mom to talk to him, but she's so stressed out that I'm sure she's forgotten.

The only thing that pisses me off is that he might tell someone that likes to talk a lot and soon everyone in the town will know, even my employers.

It's 4-21, the day after 4-20. I might get out on Friday, 4-23, or some time next week, on the bracelet.

-Spicy Chicken Fried, Marin

From The Beat: It's a hard lesson to learn, but here it is: Nobody has any control over what people say about them or what people are going to believe. Pretty soon, after observing you, people are going to know who you are, regardless of what your brother or anyone else says about you, good or bad. Can you write your employer and explain your side of these events? Maybe he'll save your job for you! Good luck!

Criminal Justice System

I get so irritated being here in the Hall because I've been coming here for the past four years and everything. I've been released. But I've never been released to my family. The courts always send me to placement.

I see the same people coming in and out of here for doing the same crime as I've done, and they get sent straight home. Then they come back a week later, or two days, or 24 hours later for the same crime, and they get sent back home with their family. That's all I want is to be with my family, but I'm off to another placement.

That's the #1 big thing that bugs the dickens out of me, it's when I see kids that come in here for the same crime I've done and serve two weeks for it, and I'm doing 107 days for it. Come on. But then again, I believe in karma, so they'll all get what's coming to them. Maybe not today, maybe not tomorrow, but one day in life karma will come around and bite them in the bootie and they'll pay for playing around with the system.

-Kimberly, San Luis Obispo

From The Beat: It's frustrating coming back, but what's keeping you from staying out? Is there something the system could do to help change your ways so you could stay out and be with yo' familia? Is there more you can do to stay out?



People Can Change

What makes me mad is when people tell me one thing and then lie about it the next day when I am in a jail cell and down in your heart, you know that you are not supposed to be there. I sit there and have to waste my life in a small jail cell.

I wish people would go through me to see and to change their lives before they end up like me. I am seventeen years old now and I have messed up my life. I am sitting in a cell right now, hoping to get out soon. People, please think of what you do before you do act.

-Florian, Marin

From The Beat: What advice would you have for the youngsters based on what's happened to you? Do you now feel like you know what to do when you get out, so you won't mess up again? Why or why not? If you have some help, do you think you can change your life for the better?

My Story

As I was small, I see your tears you cry and you beg for him to stop hitting you. He would not care; as long as he gets his anger out on you he be happy.

My mom left my house in '97 to Mexico. My dad would sometimes beat me up for no reason for the dumbest stuff you can think of. As I got older, I got stronger. I have one seventeen-year-old sister and a twelve-year-old brother. Well me and my dad end up fighting and arguing over dumb stuff, so I started being on the run and all that. I got on probation and then I did not care. I started being on the run every other month.

Then I met my brother, he help me out a lot. He cared for me. I remember one day my dad grab my nuts and squeeze them then I cried and left my house for six months. Then I found out he hit my sister so I beat him up and took his car and wrecked the car. I threw it down a bridge. (To be continued)

-Juice, San Mateo

From The Beat: Whew. What an intense and terrible story. In a previous piece you asked why your mother would leave you, and while we still aren't cool with her decision, we understand her wanting to leave a man who hits her. Is there someone else to look to for support? Are you going to be released to your father when you finish your time, or is there somewhere else you can go? You show remarkable strength in being able to write about this situation.

Who Pays the Piper?

when i come to jail again
over and over
i'm paying the price
but not money-wise
but — time-wise
that mean' every time
i come to this hole
i get closer to prison
and farther from freedom
i get harder consequences
like it went from straight release
to probation to home supe'
to e-m family preservation
and now camp sweeney
so basically i sold myself to the system
you feel me
but now i'm goin' straight
'cause the paper ain't high enough

-Lil' Lacey, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You've slid down a slippery slope, and the only way back is to stop selling dope. 'Cause as you say the paper you get paid, is not worth years in prison, okay? So get that real job and stack; say goodbye to the system — and never come back!

Don't Judge Me Until You Know Me

I feel that the system is so judgmental. They treat everyone so unfairly. This upsets me because I've come and gone in and out of jail now for three years or so, and I'm tired of it. I'm tired of the things that I do to get myself into this place.

It's not that this facility is so bad to be at, because now, honestly, it's like camp away from home, but I'm fed up with being misjudged by the people who I talk to or the probation officers, or my lawyers. It's even frustrating when he judges me wrong!

Plus, especially the judge. Now let me tell you about this judge. She don't play no games. And that's how it should be. Serious! My life, your life, isn't some take it or leave it party-all-nighter-game-type of thing. This is some serious shhh.

However, I hate when people judge me from the outside and not the inside, and that is what I feel this system is doing, has been doing, and will be doing for who knows how long.

-Ben, San Luis Obispo

From The Beat: Can you give us an example of how the system has done you wrong by judging you from the outside? How would the judgment be different if they knew you from the inside? What is your inside like? Is it like beautiful or is it ugly? Maybe a little of both? How can you let some of that beauty shine for your lawyer, PO, or judge? Are you taking your life seriously now?

Who Pays The Price?

The people I think pay the price is my family and myself 'cause my family, they had me, so every day they woke up and saw me. So now they wake up with pain and a piece in their heart is missing, just like I am when I wake up every day dreaming about my family, pretending I'm home. But I wake up seeing the four walls and a door that sucks my dreams away.

They pay the price by me being here, and it costs money. I pay the price by being stupid coming here while I'm in my cell losing my mind and heart 'cause there is no love in a cell but just struggles. I wish we didn't have to pay the price 'cause the way we pay in it here is tears, fears and pain. That's the way I pay the price while I'm in here and my family. I'm always missing my 'hood and town.

Just having the pain hurts my heart because the ones I love and care about are apart from me. Paying the price is not worth it. Be smart about the way you do things.

-Spooky, San Mateo

From The Beat: In a strange way, maybe it is the pain that both you and your family feel that keeps the connection between you going strong. The pain definitely sucks, but due to the pain you and your family are always thinking of each other and the future that you'll share together when you make it through your time. When you say, "Be smart about the way you do things," are you telling people to continue their hustle and grind but make sure they don't get caught, or are you suggesting that being smart involves dropping the game altogether? How will you continue to deal with the pain you feel as you do your time?

I Want To Make A Change

I really want to make a change in my life. I want to stop doing all the things I been doing, so when I come home I don't want to go back to the old things I used to do.

Just say one of my homeboys says, "I know this scooter shop that be can rob." I will just say no. I don't care of they tell everyone I'm a "winey" — that's the slang word for punk.

So if they don't like that they don't need to come by unless they got something right to tell me.

-Lil' Lloyd, San Mateo

From The Beat: Right on, Lil' L. It's one thing to write these words down, and it's another to act on 'em. How are you going to develop the internal strength to be able to hold your ground and change the ways that brought you here?



When People Don't Listen

What makes me mad is when people can't follow instructions, actin' stupid.

It is cool to act stupid sometimes, but not when you get other people in trouble. People who talk and can't close their mouths, that makes me mad. I act stupid, too, but when I can, not when I cannot, if you know what I mean.

Sometimes I get mad when grown folks don't listen and assume they're right. That trash get' on my nerves when they assume we' wrong! I can't stand when grown folks don't listen. And I know most of y'all feel me, and they get on your nerve, too.

So forget who think' I'm wrong, 'cause this is my opinion. You don't have to agree with me.

-Tashi, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Whether it's grown folks or young folks, whether the problem is they can't close their mouths or they can't open their minds — listening is something a whole lot of people need to learn how to do! Yeah, we feel you.

Paying The Paper

those who choose to live
by the gun die by the gun
if you do something out of line
and you get caught
you're gonna have to pay up
one way or another
you're either gonna pay
or your family or gang is gonna
someone's gotta
or if you're gonna pay
people who care about you
will still suffer too

-Lil' Payaso, 150 Crew

From The Beat: If your gang is statewide, it doesn't care if you live or die; as long as you put in work and do its dirt. But your friends and family, suffer with your every calamity. So for love's sake, give yourself a break — and get back on track.

We And My Father

i feel my father
is paying dearly
for my bad choices
i feel my father
shouldn't go through
all this stress and debt
at the age of fifty
i love my father so much
i'm a piece of trash
i need a change
bad karma hit me hard
me and my father
are paying the price

-Robert, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You're better than you've been acting, better than the bad choices you've been making. Put down the drugs (alcohol, too, is a drug), at least long enough to get on top of your thinking — for your sake, and for the sake of your father. 'Cause we're sure, as much as you love him, he loves you!

To Do Right

if i had a choice between
an intelligent mind or a heart
i would want to have
a caring heart
you are able to do right
and go for your dreams
a lot of people don't think about
how their actions will affect others
and with a heart you will be able
to feel empathy for others
also with a caring heart
you can endure pressure
and go through your endeavors
i believe that richness
is in the eye of the beholder

-Tim, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This is one of the most profound analysis of what a caring heart can provide, of just what empathy on the inside, can do, both for others and for you! When we look at you, we see dreams coming true! And we see richness, too.

**i think if
people learned
how to talk like
grown men
then a lot of
people
would still be
alive today**

Wasting Valuable Time

the person who pays
the highest price
for my incarceration
is myself
because i am wasting
valuable time
while i am locked up
i can't progress
right now i could be doing
something beneficial
with my education
when people are in jail
they don't realize
that they are wasting time
and that you only have
so much time to waste
before you don't have any left
when you are in juvenile hall
your parent or guardian
has to pay money
each day you're in here
i don't know how much it costs
everywhere else
but in alameda county
it costs my family
eleven dollars and ten cents a day
if you are in jail
your siblings lose out
on a positive role model
and have a greater chance
of falling victim to the streets
and becoming another statistic
if you have a child of your own
that's one more kid growing up
without direction or guidance

-Torre, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You make strong and persuasive arguments for doing whatever is necessary to change your ways of thinking and acting on the outs, so that you never have to see incarceration again. Everything we do, affects others, too, for better or worse —and wasting time incarcerated, is a flat-out curse!

Life Or Death

the thing that makes me mad
is when people use violence
as their first problem-solver
i think if people learned
how to talk like grown men
then a lot of people
would still be alive today
like a couple of my friends
and people i knew from around the way

-Peacemaker, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It really is a skill to learn how to talk like a grown man, a responsible and peace-loving human being. When feelings run high from hurt pride or when friends have died, it's hard to see reality: Violence is the number-one enemy on the street. Thanks for sharing your wisdom in The Beat.



Incarcerated

Hate for this stank-ass place
Rage within me from not being able to let loose and be who I be
Pain in my mom's heart and in her eyes
Angry in myself and my actions
Cautious to kindness, for it never lasts
Pity for all the stupidity that surrounds me
Strength to not let these haters break me down
Determination to do my time and not let it do me
Confidence in myself to know I'm better than this
Knowledge – I take with me and don't pass by
Serenity – keeps me cool in here, and
Patience tells me to chill
And just catch them haters slippin' on the outs

-Ashley, San Mateo

From The Beat: We feel this poem — you make us feel all the emotions you're going through. All of it, that is, until your last line. Trippin' off catching others slippin' is a sure sign that you're close to getting caught yourself. How can you leave the haters behind instead of playing into their game? Why go through all you've gone through only to throw it away by getting caught up when your patience expires on the outs?

Day Camp Gone Wrong

I believe many are being affected by me being incarcerated, but the one being most affected is myself.

The more time I do up in these places, the more used to them I get. I feel so institutionalized — it's so sad that it doesn't bother me to come here. It's literally like a day camp gone wrong. I feel like I'm getting prepared for the big league.

You're not supposed to get used to coming here, but so many of us do. It's so hard to break the cycle and do the right thing. I don't want to continue on this road, 'cause I get out May 14th, off probation and I pray this is the last time I lose my freedom.

-Ashley, San Mateo

From The Beat: It is scary when you start to feel yourself getting comfortable inside. How can you make sure that you remember there's another life out there, and that being locked up isn't a normal — or healthy — situation? What will it take for you to avoid the big league and make sure this is the last time you give your freedom away?

Paying The Price

Not having freedom, or should I say privileges, has really affected me. I hate having to be told when to use the restrooms, take a shower, when to eat, or to do anything. I must say it's their price to pay if you wanna play.

I say that it's kinda my share of paying the price for my incarceration because I'm doin' time and having my privileges taken away. Also it's my moms that's paying a price because she has to pay for my stay here. Everyone I know and knows that I'm locked up is affected by incarceration because they really miss me, especially my older brother because I had to miss out on his birthday and also my birthday coming up.

I know my mom is really affected because I'm her only young baby boy and she hates not having me around. I just hope that this will be my last time paying a price like this.

-Six, San Mateo

From The Beat: Yeah, all those people — including you — are paying a price. You say that you hope that this is the last time you'll have to pay a price like this. What will you do to ensure that it is the last time you'll pay with your freedom? How are you going to make up for lost time with your family? How are you going to pay yourself back for the mistakes you've made?

Memories

Memories last a lifetime
I remember when I'm in that state of mind
Reminisce on the past
Thinking of things that never last
Life's too short to be sad
It's even shorter spent mad
Memories equal retrospection
Looking back to the past situations
The good, the bad, the ugly
Remembering days that were sunny
Isn't it funny
Love to sit and talk about "that time"
Or talking about that person that dropped a dime
My memories never will deceive me
Thinking about some makes me can't breathe
Moms, dad, brothers and sisters used to get whippings that left blisters
Food so good make ya lick ya fingers
Karaoke like we was the singa's
Family get together
Wish they would've last forever
Cousins from here and there
Little kids running everywhere
Streets lights went on
That's when moms knew the day was gone
Mud pies and tree forts
Hide and seek, those games of course
Laughter and crying
But as I got older people started dying
Sad stories always a happy ending
The truth I'm sort of bending
A happy ending I'll tell
'Cause my life now is going well
My memories of the past
Forever they'll last
And thanks to this paper
I'll be able to look back later
Peace...

-Aok, San Mateo

From The Beat: As you reminisce, you gloss over episodes both good and bad, and there's a sort of recreation and reinvention of history that's involved — "the truth I'm sort of bending" is dead on, right down to the use of "sort of." How can you build a future out of the past that you've experienced, using the good to build on and recognizing the bad as lessons learned along the way? The past often feels sweet when we look back, but the future has a chance to be bright — what are you going to do to get to where you want to be, so that when you reminisce on this time the pain fades and you see it as another of the building blocks that can get you there?

My Favorite Teachers In The Halls!

My two favorite teachers are Ms. Mortenson and Ms. Light. The reason I like these teachers is because they're really here to help us.

When you are struggling with something they try their best to help you. You don't have to feel shy to ask them something. When I have a problem I know that I could go to them and talk to them about it. I know that they will give me some good advice.

I trust these teachers.

-El Pelon, San Mateo

From The Beat: You use the word "trust" in a very deep way in this piece — so many of the folk we meet in the Hall haven't been able to trust anyone in their lives, including any of the adults they've known. Right on for recognizing these teachers. We're sure they'll feel this piece as well.



Who's Paying For My Choice?

Everyone I know is paying the price for my mistakes.

My little sister and brother are at the age when, to remember people, you have to see them frequently. Well, I've been in jail for so long that I'm worried they're not going to recognize me.

My best friend just had a baby. I should be there for her. My dad is alone. I should be keeping him company. I should be out visiting my boyfriend.

I should be out making me some money and getting a real education. I should be enjoying my last couple months of my teenage life.

-Ginger, San Mateo

From The Beat: Though this is a short piece, we feel how many people have been affected by your situation. We also have a sense that because you recognize how deeply your actions are affecting those around you — as well as yourself — you'll make this next chance count. How are you going to make up for lost time with your family and friends? How are you going to build a renewed sense of self on the outs?

Drankin'

I like to drink. That's why I'm in here. All three times I got caught up I was drunk. Shhh, what can I say? It runs in my blood.

My dad, mom, uncles, aunties, and cousins. We all drink, but I need to cool it down a little bit 'cause every time I drink I end up in here. When I drink I'm hella cool, till somebody says something stupid. I have very low tolerance for stupidity.

When I'm drunk, I'm down to do anything 'cause at the time, I don't care about the consequences. But after, I wish I never started drinking.

-Ko'na, San Mateo

From The Beat: We know your immediate consequences, but what about the consequences the rest of your family have suffered? Can you look at them and tell yourself that alcohol has made their lives harder, not easier, and avoid some of their mistakes? We hope you take this seriously, because we have known too many wonderful people whose lives have gone down the toilet along with the alcohol they're vomiting into it.

My Legacy

If I had 24 hours to live, I would, of course, want to surround myself with my family, my boyfriend, close friends . . . just the people that I love the most.

I would want to leave behind a part of myself, something significant for my baby girl to not just remember me by, but something that perhaps in the future she could familiarize a part of herself with. I would write her a long letter. It would include me not saying the things that I wish for her to become, but letting her know that she is her own person and you are bound to make mistakes, that is the only way you can really learn from them.

I would share with her my deepest dreams and ambitions. The most important thing that I have learned about people is that under every face is someone who is dying inside, who has pain and hurt. Show kindness to even your enemies, for it takes a bigger person to show love instead of hate. Lastly, I would share one of my biggest influences on my life with her. The presence of having God in my life has affected my views on all areas of living. He is my best friend and with him I'm not afraid to move on after my 24 hours are up. A new adventure surely awaits.

-Jillisa, San Luis Obispo

From The Beat: Wow! That's a beautiful gift to give your baby girl. What are your greatest dreams and ambitions? What are some things you've learned from your mistakes? How will you use them to succeed and reach your goals?

Intelligent Black Brotha

If I had a chance to choose, I would love to be an intelligent young Black brotha, 'cause moms always said, "Ain't nothing like a smart Black man, 'cause can't nobody stop him for no reason."

Plus, I would like to start my own business one day and take all my folks off the block.

-Young CD B2, SF/YGC

From The Beat: What an interesting answer. You keep talking about standing on the block and doing time, but then you tell us you'd like to run a business and get your folks off the block. Since you know what you want, what will it take for you to spend less time on the block and more time educating yourself? What kind of business would you like to run?

Treat Others As You Want To Be Treated

I would choose an intelligent mind because I would have enough sense to know the way I wanted to be treated, and therefore I would treat others the same way I want to be treated.

With intelligence I can overcome problems in my own life, be able to survive and accomplish the things I want to do.

I love knowledge and I would still be caring because I also love to educate others.

-Niesh YTEC, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We love the way you reasoned this piece, Niesh. Some people believe in the Golden Rule: Do to others what you would want others to do to you. It sounds like that is your philosophy, too, and we've always thought it was a good one.

Intelligence Is The Way

If I had a choice between a caring heart or an intelligent mind,

I would have to pick intelligence
because then the Hall would be an absence,
and I could have another chance.

This is the way not many people choose
But without it you will lose

This is my thought
Sometimes I want to express myself and talk
And teach people what I was taught

This intelligent stuff is the way
Because these walls is not where I want to say
All it's doing is making me hate

And how many times do I have to say that's not the way
Because I'm mad and I know my mom in Palo Alto is sad

But hey, all I do is pray
And try to tell my mom it's okay
Because if I keep reading that Bible and pray

We will have that better day
This is what I have to say
Okay?

-Ju-Nut, San Mateo

From The Beat: You express yourself very well, so it's all okay with us. We hope, when you get out of here, you'll be able to calm the hate you feel so that it doesn't bring you down. The best revenge is your own success at staying out of places like this!



Choices

If I had a choice of either having an intelligent mind or a caring heart, I would pick a caring heart because you could be really smart, but greedy and stingy, and no one would like you. They would start hating on you like crazy.

If you have a caring heart, you would be truly happy, 'cause money don't buy happiness. You have to care for others in order for them to care for you. You could care for someone you don't even know, and they could be God/Jesus for all you know. You never know.

Those who care with all they heart will most likely go to heaven. But just because you're rich and have all the money in the world, they can't buy their way into heaven.

-R-Jae YTEC, SF/YGC

From The Beat: In a way, the Bible teaches that God/Jesus is in all of us, so if you are unkind to someone, that's the same as being unkind to God/Jesus. And we agree about money not buying happiness or your entrance into heaven. Still, it's nice to have money sometimes, feel us?

Making Us Worse

I don't know why they, meaning the courts, think locking someone up is going to make somebody act right.

First of all the court is locking a person up with bad people that is going to affect the person one way or the other. Whoever is locked up must be hard or get hard to do the little or big time. So being down is going to corrupt a person, one way or the other.

So locking a person up is not the answer to the problems of the youth. It's just making us worse.

-Leek B5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Although we think that some youth do benefit from being taken off the mean streets for a minute, a lot more fit your description. So, we agree that we use incarceration far too much as a reaction to behavior society would like to change. But that leaves us with the obvious question: If locking young people up makes the problem worse, what would make the problem better?

Those We Love Pay The Highest Price

Who pays the highest price? Is it us or is it people we love? Man, in my point of view it's the people we love. Why do I say that is because we did what we did to get ourselves in here, but the people who love us did not have anything to do with us being incarcerated.

The bad choices we made affect other people, not just us. That's selfishness. I know I ain't no one to say something like this, but I'm in their shoes right now, so I know what I'm talking about.

Me, personally, don't like when I see mom walk through the unit doors and only see me for only forty-five minutes, then have to leave, sad. That's why I think people who love us pay the price.

-Cubs B5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: One of the things we hope being locked up makes people think about is how many other people are paying the price for their actions. You clearly have thought about this, and that thought has clearly affected you. Why do you think most of us are selfish in this way? Why don't we think of those we love until they are hurting from our actions? Will this realization make you think about those you love in a different way the next time something you do may affect them?

I Need To Get It Together

Me, myself and I are paying the highest price for my incarceration. Why? Because I'm here locked up, it's affecting me. I'm here suffering, not knowing when I'm gonna get out.

When I'm in my cell, all I can think about is getting out and the people that I let down. I'm tired of feeling this way. I need to really get my shhh together and start doin' it right.

Now, I'm 'a try to be as good as I can; I mean it's gonna be hard, but it's worth the try, especially all the fun I'm finna miss and all the hate that's finna come along because of me tryna do right.

Please believe I'm 'a avoid all that and handle me and what I need to do. I ain't comin' back up in here.

-Christina GU, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Good attitude, Christina. Isn't it sad that people hate when you're trying to succeed? Why do you think that is the case? At least you can tell off top that they are not folks you need to care about.

No Place Like Home?

Living in a group home in Napa and kinda seein' a little bit of both worlds was really an experience. When comin' back to Hunters Point, all there was there was confusion anger, and hard times.

Now there's no place like home, but home was in the heart of San Francisco where people would feel fear and feel trapped like they were stuck there.

I try to direct my anger and do something positive with it, but now, I still haven't heard a reasonable answer to why we have to live this way.

-Lil' Al B2, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We ask ourselves the same question. What would you do to make things better where you live? What kind of positive things do you like doing? Did you learn anything from being in Napa that you can use in San Francisco?

Some People Don't Care

what makes me mad
are the people that don't care
for other people's lives
those who would take your life
in a second without any hesitation
that's one of the things
that really makes me mad
and a stupid criminal
you can't be a criminal that's hella stupid
because you're gonna get caught
and plus your hella dumb
trying to commit a crime you're not good at
the government is another thing
that makes me mad because
they don't really care about people's struggles
as long as they're making money
they're going to continue not caring
and that makes me mad
they have the power
to make this country a better place
but they don't care
and that's how it really is

-Poppa Ditty Pop, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Smart criminals make us mad, because they think being smart means they got it covered, but the smart ones hurt others and get caught eventually, too, or killed — along with the dumb ones who want to be like them. On the other hand, we agree with you that people who don't care about others are at the root of so much pain and suffering over nothing but ego and greed. So what about you? How do you show that you care about others (besides writing these pieces for The Beat)?



Conversation With A Girl

[M = Markie-bo; G = Girl]

M — So, you ready now, Boo Boo?

G — Yeah, I'm ready.

M — All right, let's start off the top. First we goin' get this paper; then we goin' invest.

G — How we goin' get this paper?

M — Any way possible, Boo Boo, but to a certain extent.

G — What you mean, "to a certain extent"?

M — I mean' we goin' do it like bosses, not to where we goin' get incarcerated for it.

G — So, you sayin' we goin' get money legally?

M — Exactly!

G — Well, I feel you on dat, Daddy!

M — Fasho' Princess!

G — So what you want me to do?

M — First, I need you to keep pursuing your education, but keep a side-job and stack anything you can do legally. Just stay tucked out the way, Boo.

G — All right, Boo.

M — All right, Boo. 'Til the next Beat and conversation, holla!

-Markie-bo, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You just stacked a lot of points with a lot of Beat readers who want to see their way out of this system and all the pain it's giving! And we predict, more than one young woman reading your piece will want to respond in the pages of The Beat. You've already begun to be that role model; just keep your foot on the throttle.

Thank You Lord

my name is kyle

i have been here for one hundred and twenty days
every morning i wake up and pray

i pray to the lord every day

i tell him how thankful i am for being here today

because "every day is not promised"

i hear that a lot from adults

and i tell the lord to get me out this place

and today is the twentieth

and i am getting out on friday

the lord answered my prayer

i am so very thankful for that

i haven't been this happy in a long time you know

anyways i just want to say stay up

and when you get out this place

don't come back

because you are hurting the people who love you

you are hurting the people who care about you

and another thing

be you

not nobody else you know

do not waste your life in this place

get out and make something of your life

peace

and i'm out

-Lil' Man, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We are so happy for you. You thought you were getting out once before, only to face disappointment and more time. But you kept your head up and your faith strong. And we add our prayers to yours that this time your expectation is not wrong. We often hear that advice to "be you," but sometimes wonder what it really means. Does it mean that so many young people are pretending to be hard or mean or fearless or ruthless, when in their hearts they know it's just an act they put on for others to see — an act that leads to the penitentiary? If so, Kyle, be you: set positive goals and follow through! Be happy, too.

**This system is bootsy.
Do whatever you got to
do to stay out.**

Living Goals

Life is time. Time is life. So in that time, make living life a goal, a goal in which you make a living and don't end up in jail or dead.

That's the goal you should pursue, unlike me, for I kept throwing my goals out the window. But it's not over yet! I still have a chance in life. I just have to make the right decisions and moves in the game of life — and don't take life lightly.

Just do right is what I'm telling myself. But there is always that demon that wants me to do evil, that wants me to come out and play. The longer I restrain him, the more powerful it gets — and the more it wants to taste blood and hardship on my soul.

The only thing that can tame the beast is a thing called self-control. But sometimes I can't find it. "It's only mind over matter." It's so easy to say it, but so hard to do it.

I just think of all the people who are in the Pen' for not controlling themselves. So that's why I just try to keep my cool instead of blowing up! To all my patnas, be coo' and keep your head up.

-Little D-gyle, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You need self-control, but as you say, that alone won't tame the beast. In recovery, they call it "white knuckling" — 'cause you're holding on so tight that your knuckles nearly burst through your skin! You need to make peace with your mind somehow. Figure out your "triggers" (what makes you go off), 'cause it might just give you that extra second to control yourself. But you need to go deeper still and find out why your passions are so strong. Writing about your life can help you find self-acceptance, which doesn't mean to accept all your bad habits as permanent, but to no longer be ruled by shame, guilt, rage, fear, hate — or any of those other time bombs in your way.

Lockdown Is A Set-Up

Man, to everyone incarcerated in the bootsy Hall or the Y or any other fake lock-up status — this Lil' Kev. This fake system is a set-up from the very start.

If you ever been arrested, in case you didn't know — once you come to jail or even go out on probation, your dumb self will be back! You won't change your ways for none of this fake trash the DA and the judge do.

Everyone got their own state of mind. So whatever anybody tries to tell you to do, it isn't any matter — because your mind is made up and you don't care what they doing to whoever to try to change 'em. They should just give up trying, 'cause it won't work.

That's why ninjas get washed or sent to the Y, because they keep doing something that they been doing and they won't stop, so they keep going back and forth to jail or Camp or the Y, or like I said, lock-up, period.

This system is bootsy. Do whatever you got to do to stay out. And don't be like some people that can't stop, won't stop being locked up, y'all!

-Lil' Kev, 150 Crew

From The Beat: If they won't stop their criminal activity, they can't stop from being locked up in a correctional facility. But for far too many, there is no correction going on. You seem to blame the judge and the DA for doing it all wrong, but if you refuse to change you're doing yourself harm. Don't go back to hang and bang on the spot; must stop, can stop; done stopped!



Pastor J-Wizzle's Page

BEFORE AND AFTER ANGER

Before Anger ...

i was the light that shines bright
i was the center of hope
i was a star twinkling at night
i was strong-hearted with no fright
i was the man that will steer you right
i was free-spirited and down to earth
i was love also pain when it hurts
i was respectful and generous
i was considerate and compassionate

After Anger ...

i was the grim reaper who creeps through the night
i was the ghost who comes to spook you with fright
i was holding that desert eagle about to end your life
i was the man who fears no one but god
i was the devil who would take your soul
i was that man sadistic and pained
i was that man crazy and insane

Now ...

i was he
i am me
i am black
pastor j-wizzle

-Pastor J-Wizzle, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We're glad anger management classes have helped you learn what to do when anger creeps up on you; 'cause this Dr. Jeckyll/Mr. Hyde (when a good and an evil personality both reside in one) scenario never ends well. Maybe if you can focus your anger on the sin and not the sinner, that same energy can keep you sane — and you'll be the winner.

Young Mastermind

young mastermind

i rip da track wit' sadistic rhymes
i'm puttin' flame to ya empire wit' every line
tryin' to turn back the hands of time
spittin' wit' da hardest heat of my generation
lookin' back at my situations
say which is my direction
shhh like dis get hectic
semi-automatic blastin' when you bringin' static
nah that ain't the way i'm'a letcha have it
i'm a savage beast tryin'a keep the peace
sweepin' ninjas off they feet
wit' my hard lyrical heat
yo' shhh is weak
makin' real ninjas obsolete

-Pastor J-Wizzle, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You can spit rhymes with the speed and heat of former times, but can you lift your mastermind up off the clichés of the grind and educate a generation that needs to find inspiration and a new vocation that won't have them end up doin' time or dead. That's what's making peace obsolete! So sweep ninjas off their mental feet instead.

County Food

man this county food ain't no joke
might as well go home 'cause it ain't no hope
you could see through our stomachs with a telescope
this here county food ain't no joke
man this county food ain't no joke
this shhh make a ninja wanna choke
this might provoke a riot
might as well have us in the pen
because eatin' this food is a lowdown sin
but man this county food ain't no joke
is this hell so we gotta go through eatin' this crap
put it in a pan with some foil and call it saran wrap
ninjas don't know how to act
clawin' and scratchin' for this county crap
but shhh this county food ain't no joke
it ain't no joke and it ain't no hope
shh i swear i will choke

-Pastor J-Wizzle, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You just wrote an instant Beat classic, 'cause so many say the food tastes like plastic. So you voice a popular opinion when you claim serving it is like sinning. Some folks though, you know, say it's not just okay but good — and beats starving in the 'hood. Others say when the county cut the budget, they decided when it comes to food to — fudge it!

Chapter Five: R&P to My Brother And My Father

Whass happenin' Beat Within! Just think, it has been almost a year next month since I lost my brother to a tragic accident — he is not gone but still remembered!

Nine years next month, not gone but still remembered, I lost my dad. That's when I kind of lost a sense of living. But after a couple of years, I got better. Yet as time went on, things started to break down. People were all out doing stuff.

And I moved to Alameda and started being out, postin' hella much, gettin' money and everything else. Me and my brothers used to kick it real tough. So I'm just saying that back then I could have hella ninjas laid down, just off the tip of my tongue.

Anyways, back to my brother and my father. Yes, indeed, my dad. He raised me well, up until his last breath. He molded me to be mindful and respectful to all elders, but never disgruntled or scrutinized by anyone.

Man, but the truth is — my brother and my daddy is gone, but will always be remembered. Hope this reaches you in heaven, love from Lil' Peabo.

-Pastor J-Wizzle, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It's fine to remember where you came from and where you've been, but posted in your daddy's old 'hood is no place to go again. You don't need to be "loved by few and hated by many" — you can expand your horizons beyond the block; give your education all you've got; plus keep coming from your heart; and you'll be loved by a whole lot. It's already true in The Beat; 'cause your readers already got love for you.

Do Too Much Boys

yes sir do-too-much records
presents do-too-much boys
LRC and young mastermind
bringin' you real street heat
true street bangers
the shhh we spit gon' leave ya mind hangin'
real street shhh we been through
present things we stompin through too
holla back atcha boys
doin' too much in effect yeeeeeehhhh

-Pastor J-Wizzle, 150 Crew

From The Beat: There are enough gangster rap stars to inspire another generation to spend life behind bars. So we hope when you're spittin' the real, you don't just add to the toll, ya feel! Point to a better way than killing and dying in the street, okay?



Pastor J-Wizzle's Page

True Story: My Spring Break

Man, I wish I didn't have to come back to Camp, because I had a helluva weekend! I went home Thursday night by the grace of God. That was the day my weekend started.

Friday afternoon, I was in downtown Oakland, seein' this nice little dark-skinned chocolate fine female. It went like this: I was talking to my girlfriend on the phone walking out of Walgreen's 'bout to get on the bus. And we was arguing on the phone, me and my girlfriend.

Well, let me tell you, I hung up on my girlfriend. Then the girl I described above, said, "Why was you arguing with her? You deserve better than that. Somebody who will treat you right." And she said, "So, what's your name?" And I said, "Lil' Peabo." Then she said, "My name is Tashanay."

And yadda mean! She then wrote her number down on a fifty dollar bill at the very same time my girlfriend called back. So I told my girlfriend to hold on as I gave Tashanay a hug and she gave me a little kiss on the cheek. We got on the same bus, and we then departed.

When I got back to Alameda, I instantly called up my potna and said, "Let me get a pill!" So he said, "Meet me at the liquor store." So I posted there, then went into the store, bought some orange juice and walked back out — and he gave me the pill in exchange for seven dollars. And I got on one!

At the same time, I am still talking to my "wife". And a little past six thirty, I hit a bottle of Jim Beam. After that hit, I started chizzlin' hella hard. We went eighteen dummy! Me and my potnas went to Union City. It was lightweight crankin'. We was fifteen deep, four cars, yadda mean! We rode up, hopped out, and we all pulled two females each. I'm talkin' 'bout it was so tuff!

I didn't go home that night. Oooh! Oooh! This is my favorite part of my story: It's Saturday. I go to work early morning until about one o'clock in the afternoon; then I am scrapin' home. When I am on my way home, I call up my potna, and I get two different pills! I get a double-stack blue dolphin and a double-stack red honda, popped them both — and in about fifteen minutes I was high as hell! Off my ass high!

But anyway, it's like seven thirty, and I call my girlfriend. She said it was cool to come through. So I went through to the North, smash over there, walked in her house and to her room. She rushed and jumped on me, started kissing me and such. She was hella high off some purple. I was ready for her and she was ready for me, yadda mean! After a few long hours of reacquainting ourselves with each other, we take a shower and cuddle.

At half past midnight, she said, "Daddy, I got something to tell you." And she said, "Daddy, I'm pregnant." Wow! You should have seen my face! It lit up like a Christmas tree! Then I told her I was thinking about running from Camp, but she said, "Daddy, stay there and finish your program." I said, "I love you! Okay, Boo Boo." And that was the end of that night.

My finale, the final day, it was Sunday. Man, this was my potna Cory's lil' get-together. He turned twenty, and again I was off a pill at his function in the middle of the day!

When I go home, I tell my mom the news about the baby-on-the-way. She said, "You couldn't wait till you got over eighteen to do this?" And I told her that it wasn't planned out. But she tried to tell me hella stuff that I didn't want to hear about, so I left.

I called Tashanay up, met her by the BV's, and, well, from there I can't tell you what happened with her! Bye-bye!

-Pastor J-Wizzle, 150 Crew

From The Beat: There are so many danger signs and flashing warning lights in this piece, that it's really hard to understand your happy-go-lucky it's-all-good tone throughout this story of your, yes, very eventful spring-break long weekend. That you want to announce your imminent fatherhood and still brag about cheating on your "wife" (or, more accurately, pregnant girlfriend) at the same time, doesn't fill us with optimism about your relationship with this child (if it's born) or its (would-be) mother. But then, it goes hand-in-hand with all those pills you were irresponsibly popping. Drugs, like purple and E, can make it all feel like a wild, fun, free-wheeling adventure — but that baby deserves to be more than a footnote in a story you retell from some cell in the system. You need to slow your roll. You've got the ability and intelligence to become a mature and responsible young man, but planned or unplanned, the author of this piece is not ready to be a father — or not a good one!

Restricted

Last weekend, I was restricted because of some dumb stuff that I had done at home. I was having hella fun off of pills the whole weekend and really wasn't at home. So that's why my mom is mad at this particular time.

So the end result, is that I had to stay at Camp last weekend. But that really made me think about the lifestyle I really do plan to leave behind me. Sometimes being restricted is cool. It can keep you out of trouble, and you can learn some new things while you have fun at the same time.

But on the other hand, being restricted can make you feel bad because you know you messed up somehow. And it can be really stressful to be here when you think about what you're missing. I missed talking, cupcaking, and seeing my BM. Also I didn't get to be with my family or my potnas.

But that's okay, because my family and friends never really do anything. Anyway, I liked my weekend in Camp. I'm safe! And that's all that matters.

-Pastor J-Wizzle, 150 Crew

From The Beat: In order to take that feeling of being safe beyond the confines of the Camp, you'll need to work on showing better judgment when you're on the outs. It's cool that you realize the Camp kept you out of trouble last weekend, but you need to learn how to keep yourself out of trouble if you want to live free and stay free in your future. And with a baby about to be, seems like that should be your top priority!

Sometimes being restricted is cool. It can keep you out of trouble, and you can learn some new things while you have fun at the same time.



"The Highest Price"

Price Of Life

they who
choose to play
is not
the highest price
i will pay
the highest price
when it is meant
to be paid
that has been life
and this is
the value of
nothing

-Nathan

From The Beat: Perhaps we all end in nothing, but a well-lived life is really something priceless. Can you feel this?

My Jefita

I think my jefita pays the biggest price because she is in the outs suffering and I'm in this place for doing my desmadre (mess). And I just want to tell all the homies to stay out of here, porque (because) this ain't no lugar (place) to be ok locos. Keep trucha, keep your head up high, don't let no one put you down.

Much love y respecto.

-L

From The Beat: Sometimes others pay a price for our mistakes. How does this make you feel that your mom is suffering because of a decision you made? Do you feel like you need to change your lifestyle because it is hurting people other than yourself? Why or why not?

The Highest Price

I think that everyone in my family, including me is affected by my incarceration because my mother has to pay for the lawyer, and pay for my time sitting in jail. And she has to be without her son for the time.

I'm affected because I have to worry about my mother and me by wasting my life in this jail. For some of us, it is not too late to get in the right shoes.

-B-Bo

From The Beat: It's not too late for you. Some people change their lives when they are over fifty and in prison. You are less than half that age and less deep in this life than they, so it's possible. But do you want a different life — a free life? You got to want it.

Are You Playing

are you playing
'cause if you are
don't play with me
i mean i'm just saying
i'm a stunna
can't you see
don't get it wrong boo
you know i'm down with you
just let me know
are you playing
the conversations
and past looks
i can't lie
you could get me hooked
just let me know
are you playing
keep this on the dee-el
'cause there are
haters in our way
it don't matter if they here
it ain't like you
ain't gon' stay
i just got one more
thing to say
are you playing
'cause if you are
don't play
with me

-Hanna and Tishay

From The Beat: This poem shines with its rhymes as it flows down the page. Even if the topic is same old say, it's more than okay — comin' from the likes of Hanna and Tishay!

Those Who Commit The Crime

To me, if you do the crime you survive the time. So I think that we pay the highest price because we chose to commit the crime and we also miss out on the outside world, the normal stuff.

We also get left behind in the important stuff like school, girls, and all kinds of fun things because money ain't everything.

-Lil' Guan

From The Beat: You're right, money ain't everything, but sometimes folks get so caught up they forget that. Have you decided getting money isn't worth paying the price of incarceration?

Family First

"Those who choose to play — will pay!" That's the truth. I think if you play with the system, you got to pay with the system.

It's like the time you're being here you still got to pay — every day! Our families are struggling to pay for us being here, and that's messed up. I feel bad for my jefita struggling to pay for me being here!

But I'm going to Camp now. So I'm gon' try to change and help my family out. But something that ain't gon' change is that I'm a "gangster" to the fullest, no matter what. I want to say, "What's up!" to all the homies locked up. Stay up, carnales.

-Giggles

From The Beat: What you give with one hand, you take back with the other. You can't live "a gangster to the fullest" and change! Change what? That statewide drug-war pitting brown against brown, is what makes your jefita frown; 'cause as long as you keep acting "down" — that's how long the system will play you like a clown. You need to choose. Don't make your jefita lose!

High Price For Family

The highest price I have paid is not being able to help family issues on the out side that I could if I was not locked up.

-James

From The Beat: Keep your head up because you will one day be reunited with your family. Remember the words you wrote and try helping your family out more next time. The best thing you can do for them is to get your stuff together.

Pricey

I think I'm paying the highest price for my incarceration because I'm doin' the time in this hellhole and I gotta stress in my room and have that guilt in my mind that I messed up.

-Young Ant

From The Beat: A man who makes a mistake and fails to correct it — makes another. What can you do to make better decisions in the future?

Paying The Price

I think I'm paying the price because I'm sitting in Juvenile Hall missing out on hella shhh that's going on, on the outs. Like going to school and seeing my friends and family and I'm missing out on parties and dances and everything else.

-Lil' Bear

From The Beat: You are paying the price. Is there anyone else in your life who is suffering the consequences of your actions? A family member or a friend? Is what you did worth this price?

Going Through Hell

the price of grinding
is shining or jail or death
so play this game
'cause i'm living to die
so fuhgit it
only god can judge
fuhgit bush
and the government
and the system
the government made this game
and they made the price
so i play the game to win
and say fuhgit the price
so i'm going to leave with a bang
i'm too deep in this game to get out
so i grind to shine
treat females like they mine
live to be a legend
see you in heaven
'cause we going through hell
RIP MAT & Ju-Ju

-T-man

From The Beat: If you say "fuhgit the price" then you're not playing to win, you're playing to lose — 'cause that's the price: lose your life, or lose your freedom first. You're in too deep not to get out a game that's cursed. And we say, better MAT and Ju-Ju were alive today! Don't let grief take your mind away.

Are You Playing

are you playing
'cause if you are
don't play with me
i mean i'm just saying
i'm a stunna
can't you see
don't get it wrong boo
you know i'm down with you
just let me know
are you playing
the conversations
and past looks
i can't lie
you could get me hooked
just let me know
are you playing
keep this on the dee-el
'cause there are
haters in our way
it don't matter if they here
it ain't like you
ain't gon' stay
i just got one more
thing to say
are you playing
'cause if you are
don't play
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From The Beat: This poem shines with its rhymes as it flows down the page. Even if the topic is same old say, it's more than okay — comin' from the likes of Hanna and Tishay!

Price of Life

they who choose to play
is not the highest price i will pay
the highest price when it is meant to be paid
that has been life and this is the value of nothing

-Nathan

From The Beat: Perhaps we all end in nothing, but a well-lived life is really something priceless. Can you feel this?

Mom Is Paying The Highest Price?

I think my moms is playing the highest price 'cause she has done so much. She has tried to make me the best man that she could, but a woman can only show so much.

I've did so much and all I have done is just messed up, and I did dumb shhh.

-D-Moe

From The Beat: It's good that you admitted that your mom is paying the highest price. Looking outside of yourself and needs is a huge step in the right direction. You are seeing reality. It's definitely not too late. You may have time to face but you can work on your relationship with your mom and be there for her through letters, thoughts and prayers.



Paying The Price

I think I paid the price for something I didn't do, but I deserve it for snitching on my parents. 'Cause if I would have kept it in, I would have never been in a group home to be put in this point of view. I wanted everything to go my way and for me not to be put like I started it all.

I snitched, it went my way, and faded off. I chose most things I wanted and now it's gone. Now I got framed and now I'm here. That's how it is, I did not do it.

-Use B2

From The Beat: First, saying something about your folks putting hands on you is not snitching, it's the right thing to do. Second, it sure may feel like it was wrong when it seems like you're in an even worse situation now. So let's look at the situation you're in now. What messed you up in the group home? Is it something you can avoid in the future? Are you and your family getting any help to establish a better relationship? Keep doing what's right.

The Highest Price

I choose to play, so I am paying this place as we speak. I don't play like a little kid. I played with the game, that's why I am paying the highest price.

My mom and dad are paying the highest price right now because I'm not really stressing in here, my mom and dad are the ones out there stressing more than I am.

-Bear B2

From The Beat: Why do you choose to play in a game that you have to pay dearly for? How do you feel about you causing your parents stress?

Nothing Higher Than This Price

I can start off on this topic by saying that my mother, brother, and sister pay the price because I'm not around to help them and make them feel good as being me.

My mother because she's the one that has to come see me in this damn YGC uniform. Then I think my girlfriend and cousin. My cousin because I'm not around to bug her and shhhh. My girlfriend because I'm not around when she needs somebody.

And to top it off, me because I'm the one that has to pay the price for this shhhh. I'm the one that's locked up in here. I'm the one that's being missed out there from family and friends. There's nothing higher than the price I'm paying.

-Juice-Loo B5

From The Beat: You are definitely paying a price, JL, but are you getting any benefit for the price you're paying? You're not on the street either doing dirt or having dirt done to you; you're not in harm's way; you're not six feet under. We're not saying the benefit is worth the price, but we're saying at least it should be factored into your thinking. By the way, what did you like to bug your cousin about?

Paying A Big Price

I think that if you do wrong you have to pay a big price. That's really true 'cause I had sold drugs and now am suffering — in jail every day just waiting and waiting.

-Rebekah GU

From The Beat: What would you be doing if you weren't locked up right now? Do you see yourself selling drugs once you get out? What do you think would be the best thing for you right now?

I Know I Can

My baby pays the highest price because she is affected by the things I do and that truly hurts me so bad, but I can't do anything about that anymore. But I know I can change my ways around to be able to provide for her and myself. 'cause I am tired of being self-destructive to myself and that just got old. So to everybody, just stay up.

-Estrella GU

From The Beat: We know you can do it, too. Do you ever write your daughter letters so when she gets old enough to read that she'll know where you were and what you were thinking about her?

Mom Pays

My mom is the person that is paying the highest price for my incarceration 'cause she's the most important person in my life. She's always thinking that it was her fault and that she didn't raise me in a right way. She is always crying, and I feel bad...

-Pastrulo B1

From The Beat: We're sorry your mom feels so bad that she takes the blame for you being here. How will you change when you get out, so that you don't have to see your mom crying all the time?

At A High Price, But What Quality

For those that's been in the system for a hot one, and is looking at time, my seven months here are adding up until I get sent to the Y or some program. Time will tell. But money is coming in or to the system that put more zeroes in California's bank account, the more time we stay.

It will come down to who's got an intelligent mind and heart that cares about himself or herself. Soon, when they let you out that cage that you been in a minute, it's all about choice. You choose to be a thug. Hey, it's your life, but if you want the next man's pockets get fatt, hey.

You don't even like the dude called the system. They won't ball out when we get out and don't come back. All you find in all jails are the same people getting out and coming right back.

My seven months here, it's been almost ten people that got out and came right back. It's a shame, but all I do is try to preach to them not to come back, because those chances only come, a dime a dozen, unless the judge is racist, so you feel you want to be a the one balling out, not the system.

-JD B5

From The Beat: You've learned a lot by observing the revolving door of juvenile hall. But the most important lesson in this piece is that "it's all about choice." We're not sure what you mean about the judge being a racist (can you explain this?), but we admire any effort by anyone to convince young people that this door is not worth walking through, except for those who are getting fatt off y'all.

My Parents And Brother Pay

I think who pays the highest price is my parents and brother, because my parents taught me to do the right thing when I was young, and my brother taught me as well, but I just don't listen to them. That is why I got locked up in here.

-Mei B2

From The Beat: Do you think you will listen now? What needs to happen for you to stay out?

The Damn Highest Price

My mom and I am paying the highest price because I am not home in my bed eating a Philly cheese steak, doing my homework, talking to my mom, playing PS2.

I don't need to be in this shhhh-hole 24 hours a day eating this canned food. I need to be at the house eating some good ass soul food, with a thick ass female that love and care for me.

This time if they let me go home, I am going to stay out by to the right.

-Money Earnin' Mount Vernon B1

From The Beat: Well, MEMV, we hope you cut this piece out of The Beat and carry it with you all the time. That way when you're tempted to do the things that lead to the Hall, you can take it out and read it, and go do something else...

My Mind

I feel that I am paying the highest price because I am in jail doing the time.

If I had to choose between having an intelligent mind or a caring heart, I will choose an intelligent mind.

-Staria GU

From The Beat: Good start on both of these issues, Staria. Next time give us a few more details.

"The Highest Price"

Cash Out

Moms always said if you do the crime, then you do the time and ride it out to the fullest. It's like what you want, there's always a price to something, and when you do something that ain't cool, it's a price to pay when you step in front of the judge and get yo' sentence.

But momma said if you wanna be big and do big man things, then you gotta do the big man time, so it's on me 'cause that's the life that I choose to live and I'm paying it off.

-Young CD B2

From The Beat: How long will you choose to live this life? How long do you plan on putting your freedom and your life on the line?

Family Pays The Highest Price

I think my family is paying the most while I'm in here. They have to worry about me.

I wish I could change this situation, but unfortunately I can't. I just pray that one day I'll be outta here and home with my family. I guess I'm paying the price.

You know I'm going to do this time and get it over with. Then later on in life there will be no more prices to pay after jail.

-Diddy B5

From The Beat: We agree with you that your family is paying a high price for your incarceration. Of course, the price you are paying is not small, either. The only thing we would caution you about is thinking that there are no prices to pay after jail. Everything has consequences, whether your in jail or not, so you will always have to weigh the price of ever choice you make.

The Highest Price

The highest price.

I do a lot of time in my life.

Doing what I haven't had to do.

Stayin' true to myself.

I'm getting shipped to Colorado state,

I think I'm goin' insane

I'm still contemplating on what I want to do as a individual, my time is minimal,

I know my life's on the line out there on the streets pushin'

keys, sellin' D

Bein' connected with Tiff

the highest price is my life

Playin' my cards right

not tryin' to fight,

I'm gon' be tight

I'm not just gon' spend the night

in jail every night.

I'm going to be me, stay down

and be there for the crown

not be puttin' it down.

I hate it when females get sick

Knowin' damn well they not gon' want to hit,

I do what I'm gon' do for sho'

Close the doors to my past.

Goin' back will be on my last.

-Tiffany GU

From The Beat: So you are going to give up that street life and play your legit cards? Are you learning how to avoid drama, like walking away from shhh talkers? What plans do you have for staying away from the dope game?



"The Highest Price"

Everybody's Affected

There are a lot of people who are affected by me being here. My lil' bra is affected because of the things I did. My grandma is affected because she is stressin'. My girlfriend.

Everybody I am close to is affected by me bein' here, one way or another.

-Skeezz B4

From The Beat: We know you ran out of time to finish, and we're sorry, because we like where this piece is heading. When you realize your actions affect so many people, does it cause you to want to change anything about your life on the outs?

...they have to go through the stress of knowing if or if not their kid is all right.

Who Pays Da High Price

The first one who pays the highest price when being locked down is the incarcerated person. Why? Because he/she are being robbed of their freedom, which is the most important thing dat you need in order to get through life period.

Next one is your parents or guardian because being away from someone who watched you grow can't see you as often as they want to.

-Young Fatz B5

From The Beat: It is true that you're freedom is taken away from you, and in that sense you are "robbed." But it seems to us that you invited the system to rob you by giving them the chance to lock you up. Do you have any responsibility for this "robbery"?

My Parents Go Through It

I say that my parents go through the most, because they have to go through the stress of knowing if or if not their kid is all right.

For me, my mom has high expectations of me. And on top of that, I'm her only child, so it's like doubled.

-Squad Boy YTEC

From The Beat: What do you think you owe your parents? How can you pay them back if you're locked up? What changes do you plan to make in your life to live up to your mom's expectations?

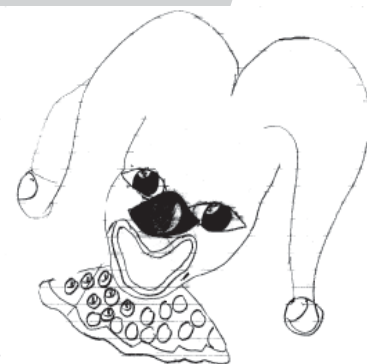
The Highest Price

I think that the person that is paying the price the most is myself, because I am the one who is suffering the most, 'cause whatever I did to get back in here for the eighth time of my life. And I think that I need to really think about what I have to do to stop coming here.

And another person that is affected by my incarceration is my young sister because I have to set an example for her. Right now I am not doing a good job at it, so I am trying to get my life together so I can do what I have to do to stay out and get my life straight.

-Young Gino GU

From The Beat: Now that you've been thinking about it, what do you think it's going to take to get your life straight? What do you want for your little sister?



Hillcrest

High Price To Pay

I personally feel that it's shared both ways, paying a price. My family cares for me, so they are hurting emotionally. They are paying somewhat of a price because I'm the missing piece of their puzzle. They can't put it together.

I'm paying the ultimate price. I'm the one locked up. I'm the one who lost my freedom. But I can't blame anyone, but myself. So I'm paying the price for putting me in this situation. I'm paying a high price.

-Aok

From The Beat: We feel you, in that both your family and you pay a high price for your incarceration. How are you going to make up for lost time when you get out, and start paying your parents — and yourself — back for the price you've had to pay?

Who Pays

Who pays? My mother pays for me being here. She's the one who really suffers. She pays for my actions that I committed. She's the one who stays up late at night worrying 'bout me.

My siblings pay for me being here when they miss me. All they can do is reminisce the time I've spent with them. All the times we played together as kids, the last time we were together.

My lady pays for me not handlin' it at the moment. She's the one who stress on me of how I'm doing in here and when I'll get out.

A lot of my homies (carnales) suffer. I'm not there with them, but here with other homies.

While I'm here, the courts, DA, POs, and others get a laugh and a kick out of me if they know how much others pay, not only money, but more pain and suffering.

P.S. You can see from this I'm paying, also.

-Boxer

From The Beat: If so many are paying, Boxer, then what's the payoff for you to do what you do that brings you here? Do you think it's right for so many others to be paying for your actions? Does this make you want to change your actions to minimize the payments? We hope so.

The Highest Price

I think we pay the highest price because we are the ones wasting our time in here. We could have a job and be doing something productive with our lives. Then when we get out we have to start over and we embarrassed to tell people we incarcerated. We don't like checking yes to "if you have been locked up in the past seven years."

When you say the highest price I look past money; I don't look at materialistic things. But the best thing for us to do is to find a way to better ourselves. Whenever you fall, your best bounce back.

-A-Dog

From The Beat: Right on, A-Dog. What'll you do when you're applying for a job in the future and you are faced with the question of whether you've been locked up? Do you think people will give you the time to try to explain yourself? More importantly, how are you going to bounce back? Where are we going to see you in a couple of years?

You And Me

The ones who pay the highest price are you and me. It's not just the time I'm doing that makes it hard on me, because I know what I did is wrong and for my action I'm going to pay my consequences, but my family also pays a price for me being here. Not only they pay \$25 a day for this, which isn't really a problem because I can pay the bill when I get out, but love can't be paid back with money.

All the love my family and close ones gave me, trying hard to keep me from coming to this place, this is my reply and I feel like I'm giving them my back. I feel bad because I know they ain't sleeping well because I'm not home every day, two visits a week is not enough to show my parents I'm sorry. But I'll make it up — it's just a matter of time.

-Lunatic

From The Beat: We feel your response to our topic, and it's clear that both you and your family are paying a price for your incarceration. How will you make up for lost time when you get out? What will you be willing to sacrifice so that you can stay with your parents on the outs instead of risking being away from them in the future?

I Pay The Most

I think when you get incarcerated the person who pays the most is you. When the time that the police reads you your rights it feels like it's all over if you know what I mean, soon as you go to court and the judge sentences you, you fall. Your mind, emotions and feelings are not really gone but don't matter anymore.

The judge, the staff and your parents think that being locked up and away from everything and everyone is easy or is just a punishment. It is not — nobody really knows what they can do to you but you. It can either make you or break you.

-J Keez

From The Beat: Your mind, emotions and feelings do matter — maybe even more than on the outs, 'cause they're the things that no one can take away from you. Do you think you'll be made or broken by the time you're facing? How will you do the time you're facing in a way that will see you come out on top? It's not over, J Keez, and while you won't decide where you go next, you can decide how you'll use the time you end up doing.



Never Stop

A lot of things make me mad. The police makes me mad because they always tryna get somebody off the street just because they trying make some money.

Some people need money so they could get something in their stomach. There's a lot of people that don't give a damn out there on the streets, just killing people. But the thing is it's never gonna stop. That's one of the most things I'm mad at.

-Young Rogue

From The Beat: You know, YR, this makes us mad too. But if it's never going to stop, can you do anything to reduce it? Can you make a contribution, one way or another, to the situation on the street and in your life? How?

Can't Do Anything I Want

What makes mad is that I have to be here locked up and I can't do anything that I want to do, like at night I be hella hungry I can't eat till next morning.

Another thing that gets me mad is that people be talking shhh too much and they don't be doing nothing. I think everything gets me mad, but sometimes I won't say nothing, I'll just keep it to myself 'cause I use take it out on fights all the time

-Kasper

From The Beat: It's a big step from reacting to the haters by fighting to where you're at now, where you recognize you can't be fighting all the time. How can you maintain? Do you keep your anger bottled up inside, or do you find healthy ways to let it out (working out, finding someone who you know will hear you out and letting it all out)? Just keep thinking about all them midnight snacks waiting for you back on the outs — if you stay there.

Hifey In The Room

The thing the makes me mad is when people talk bad about my sister. The reason why it gets to me is because they constantly do it just to make me get all hifey.

Another thing that makes me mad is when I see my mom cry when I was out. I also get mad when the staff just hate on you.

-David

From The Beat: If folk do it just to make you hifey, and they know it makes you hifey, you're giving 'em the key to get at you. We know it's easier said than done, but is there any way to take away their power by ignoring 'em?

I Wish

I wish I could fly away to a better day where there is no stress no problems and my family's living free. I don't mean free from bars. I mean free from this system where everything is a lie.

They say one thing and do the other. Why? And then to top it off, they want us to follow their rules.

Well, not Vell. I'm gone do what I got to do to survive even as bad as killing an enemy to keep my life. I know it may not seem like the best thing to do, but it's the only way to survive in this game where there's no rules.

But if the game is that hard, why don't you leave? 'Cause San Francisco is what I bleed. It's my area. My mind is based around it. Like I said once, there is no change in me

-Young Vell

From The Beat: We have said before that we can't be sure we wouldn't make the same choices under the same circumstances. But we don't think you can blame hypocrisy for your choices. You're right, of course, those people with power and money usually got it by being shady, one way or the other, and that makes them big hypocrites. But that just indicts them, it doesn't get you off the hook. We can't help but point out that when someone is as intelligent as you, there may be other options available than the choices you see. In other words, instead of just A and B, maybe there's a C that you haven't considered. As for change, nothing remains the same, not even you.

"What Makes You Mad?"

What Makes Me Mad?

What makes me mad is because I am not with my family and brothers because I don't get to see them like I used to see them every day. I can't stand all this suffering that I'm going through. I miss mis carnales and jefita so much — I can't lie.

I know I'm a strong vato that keeps it real. I don't be faking all this sadness that I have in me. I'm just a strong vato and keep it firme. I'm angry because all these vatos aren't keeping it real with themselves. All I gotta say is that just to be yourself. I'm gone. Alrato...

-Tortuga

From The Beat: One of the things we dig most about what you write is that you're strong enough to admit the sadness you feel. Why do you think so many of your peers can't admit to the sadness that they feel? How do you stay yourself? Do you miss your family enough to be willing to sacrifice your vato ways?

Mad At You

I can't stand this hate in me
can't get it out of me

I'm like this so don't try to change it
it won't change and I know it's a shame
but when you touch this eagle
best believe you'll get the evil in me

I suggest don't try to mess wit' me
'cause I don't know how to stop myself
from all this pain that I want to put you in

I could be firme if you are firme wit' me
I could have trust in you if you don't do me dirt

and put me through all this pain
I could have your back if you don't turn your back on me

I'm a firme jaina

I keep it real

I got a sweet heart for you
if you want it come and get it

but please don't mess wit' me
'cause I wouldn't be able to forget it.

Much respect, I'm gone. Al rato...

-Mona

From The Beat: This is an interesting piece — it goes deeper than just straight out hating on others, instead talking about the hate you have in yourself that you wish you could get rid of. Where do you think the hate you have inside comes from? Have you been done dirty before? Have you met anyone who hasn't done you dirty, who has been worthy of your trust?

There's a lot of people that don't give a damn out there on the streets, just killing people.

What Angers Me!

Stupidity, closed-mindedness, haterism and fakeness are the main four things that irritate me, and where it's all you see.

-Ashley

From The Beat: How do you deal with the things that anger you?

Ignorance

The thing that makes me mad is when people, as in young people, use their ignorance to bring down other people and try to put themselves above other people when they are on a lower level themselves.

-Roderick

From The Beat: Ignorance is a trip, and we feel why it makes you mad. What can be done to educate folk who hate on others? How can you deal with their ignorance better, so that your anger doesn't get you in trouble?

"Weekly Writings"

Why You, Bro?

First of all, I would like to pay my respect to Homeboy that passed away — Vicente Elisando aka "Chente." RIP Homie. You'll never be forgotten.

I know you're up above watching over us. I still can't believe that you're gone, Bro. I still remember the last day we were kickin' it, Bro. We picked up your smell dog and went to your aunt house to get food for the dog.

Damn, Bro, you used to say your mutt was a killa. But we both knew it was a scary-ass dog. We're all going to miss your loud mouth and all the crazy things you used to do. Always down to smash on our enemies.

I'm sorry, Bro, that you left your son behind. Now he doesn't have a father in this life to look up to. They took you away, Homie, and there's nothing I can do about it in here.

But I know one day I'm going to touch the streets again. It's like since you left, Bro, more problems been happening to me, Homie. I just found out the other day that my cousin is facing 25-Life for shooting someone. But I guess that's the price you pay when you deep in the game, and you're livin' that life.

I know will see each other one day, Bro. Till then, RIP, Homie.

Much love and respect.

-Indio

From The Beat: We feel the pain in this tribute to Vicente, but we also feel the threat, the danger, the unending cycle of violence that took your friend away from you, and keeps taking friends, fathers, brothers, and cousins away. You say you honor Chente for always being ready to smash on your enemies, and now he is dead! So you promise to smash, and they will smash, and you will smash, and in the end, all of you will be smashed! Is there no other way?

Almost There

Day by day I stare at my calendar

A paper that gives me a reminder

That if I come back it won't be Hillcrest

-Six

From The Beat: That's a good, if scary, reminder. What are you do to make sure that you don't come back?



"What Makes You Mad?"

That Makes Me Mad

What makes me mad is that when I try my best to succeed in life or something, somebody steadily is trying to mess me up. What else makes me mad is that when I do something for somebody and they be so ungrateful. So after that happens, I start being more cautious with my kindness.

I mean, a lot of things make me mad, but one paper won't be enough; I think I could write a book with all the things that makes me mad.

-Megan GU

From The Beat: Dang, we're sorry so many things make you mad. How do you deal with your anger? Could you write a book about what makes you happy, too?

What Makes You Mad?

What really makes me mad is being incarcerated. It pisses me off because every time I get a visit, I have to watch someone very special to me walk out those doors and return to their life.

Me, I go back to a little box and wait to come out to a bigger box. So you wanna know what makes me mad? Not being with my family makes me mad. Waking up, and the first person I see is a counselor telling me to wake up at 6 o'clock in the morning 'cause it's shower time. That makes me mad.

-P-Nut B5

From The Beat: It would make us mad, too. But is any of that "mad" directed at yourself? After all, didn't you give the system the opportunity to put you where you are? Yes, being in jail would make almost anybody angry, but there are causes and there are effects. Jail is the effect. What's the cause?

Don't Disrespect My Family

When somebody do something 'bout my family, me and my homies, that make me mad 'cause I felt that I couldn't help them...

-Pastrulo B1

From The Beat: What do you do when you get mad? How do you handle it?

The Hall Only Makes Things Worse

What makes me mad is when your own family betrays you. They want to call the police and shhh, thinking that the Halls is going to help you when it's really not. It's only making things worse

-Lil' Wifey GU

From The Beat: What is going to help you? What is the best thing for you right now?

Hands Off

I get mad when people put their hands on me or yell at me. And when my mom make me stay in the house when it's a party or when my girl is about to take me shopping or to the movies.

-No Name B1

From The Beat: What do you do when you get mad?

Soft But Hard

What makes me mad is when these ninjas out here be talking shhhh, but really soft. And I hate when ninjas talk behind my back.

-Young Mont YTEC

From The Beat: We had to take more out of this piece than we left in. Feel us?

Believing Rumors

What makes me mad is when people spread rumors about me and the next person believes them.

-Squad Boy YTEC

From The Beat: What kind of rumors? Do you ever talk behind someone's back?

Repeated Mistakes Make Me Mad

Ignorance makes me mad, and when people keep making mistakes.

When girls are ignorant, and do ignorant things, they make no sense.

A lot of things make me mad. When I keep going to jail for being ignorant. By not being ignorant you think before you act.

-Drew YTEC

From The Beat: We agree with your definition of not being ignorant. What kind of "ignorant things" do girls do that make you mad?

Bad Role Model

What makes me mad is that my lil' brother has to go to a group home for six months and I'm going to one, too. I just wanna let my lil' brother James know that I really do love that lil' ninja.

I really feel like that it's my fault that he is locked up because I didn't be a good role model for my lil' brother. I just want my brother to forgive me and let him know I love him.

-Jasmine GU

From The Beat: Well, it does sound like you could be a better role model, but it's not your fault James is going to a group home. What will you do to be a good role model for him?

Want To Go

The things that make me mad are when I have to sit in here doing dead time when I could be at Colorado doing my time and trying to get it over with so I won't have to worry about it. 'Cause I really don't want to go to a group home, but I know I would rather be there than spending time in Juvie, ya feel me?

But I am going to this group home/girls ranch, stay and get off probation, and then tell everyone to kiss my butt. Ya feel me?

Also something else that makes me mad is dumb-ass females that be doing hella much over nothing, ya feel me? Holla

-Young Gino GU

From The Beat: We're sure lots of Beat writers will feel you on this. What makes you feel that you're ready to do it right this time?

Talking Behind My Back Makes Me Mad

What makes me mad is when someone talks shhhh behind ya back because they don't have enough guts to tell you in front of ya face. All they good at is talking, but can't back it up.

What also makes me mad is being away from my son and my loved ones. But I know one day I'm finsta get up out this hell cell.

But I look at it as if I'm going to be in here for da rest of my life, so I wouldn't have to think about some place dat I can't just get up and go. It's just somethin' to help me pass through the time.

-Young Fatz B5

From The Beat: That's an interesting strategy you've devised to pass your time. Does it really help you? If that's what helps you get through this experience, what kind of strategy will you develop for life on the outside to make sure that's where you stay?

Don't Doubt Me

When people doubt things that I can do, that really makes me mad, 'cause I'm tired of people telling me I can't make it or I can't do it, like I'm not capable of doing things.

That's why sometimes I wish I was grown and had enough money to go live on my own. Because all the grown-ups in my life only put me down.

-Shannon GU

From The Beat: We're sorry you don't feel like you have the support you need. Is it possible that these folks could they just be putting down the choices you are making? What can you do to prove the doubters wrong?

He's Looking At Me!

People that talk behind my back make me mad. People that look at me and don't say nothing makes me mad, especially if they don't know me.

That's some of the stuff that makes me mad, chea! It makes me mad because that's some sucka stuff to do. To talk behind somebody back, and also look at somebody you don't know, and don't say nothing.

And being a sucka don't run through my bloodline, chea!

-Lil' Joe YTEC

From The Beat: Why do you think people give you the eyeball without saying anything? What do you do when that happens?



Sitting And Waiting?

What makes me mad is me sitting and waiting and hating that I put myself in this position.

-Rebekah GU

From The Beat: What are you going to do to make sure you don't put yourself in this position again?

What Makes Me Mad

What makes me mad in here, Man, is seeing people leave then come back in a few days or weeks, and you are facing YA. Even I think that everybody put too much on the Y, but you wish you could have the chance to get out, because you can build yourself up choosing what's right for you and throwing out all the things that's bad for you.

I say they give the chances to the wrong people. What I heard is the innocent get time and the guilty go home. Just spreading some knowledge and stuff that makes me mad, when I am in here, but I ain't going to knock the ninja out, or nothing, because I'm too wise to stoop down to their level.

The worst thing about it is you don't wanna catch another case.

-JD B5

From The Beat: We're interested in the notion that the innocent get time and the guilty go home. Does that make you innocent? You must know from your own experience, JD, that while some innocent people do get caught up by the system, that doesn't mean that everyone in the system is innocent...

I Just Feel Like Swinging

Nothing makes me mad, but sometimes when someone wants to fight me, I just feel like swinging. But it don't make me mad.

I only get mad at myself when I do something stupid. I got to concentrate and try to be in control so I know what I'm doing, stealing cars and breaking into houses and other things.

-Sea-More B1

From The Beat: So, you want to fine-tune your skills as a car thief and burglar? We suggest you write some of your techniques down so that when they send you to prison, you can teach a class in house breaking...

Don't Talk Behind My Back

What makes me mad is people who talk behind people's backs. People that do that are two faced. Stay sucka free.

-Mar G's YTEC

From The Beat: Do people ever talk about you? What do they say?

I see myself in the dark, surrounded by the negative and the crime.

Separation From What I Love

What makes me mad is knowing the fact that I'm locked up 'cause I can't be with the ones that I love.

I know I do wrong, and right now I'm blind. I see myself in the dark, surrounded by the negative and the crime. But one day I will wake up and see the sunshine, and finally get to be once again with the ones that I love.

But for now I'ma do the time. I'll be fine 'cause one day I'ma shine.

-Lil' Weasel B1

From The Beat: We believe you will shine one day, Lil' Weasel. We also believe that, although you're surrounded by darkness, you are not blind. You can see. Yes, the dark makes it hard to maneuver safely, but if you keep your eyes open — and on the prize — you can minimize the negative.

Don't Tell Me What To Do

The shhhh that makes me mad is hen somebody tries to tell me what to do. I mean it could be anybody — PO, Judge, Grandmother, friend, anybody. I don't like it.

-Skeezz B4

From The Beat: You must have a lot of trouble in here, because it seems to us that someone is always telling you what to do.

What Makes Me Mad

This what makes me mad, being in YGC and getting some room time, and when people start getting on my nerves.

This is what makes me very, very mad, when I can't see my sister and brother, and when I lose my freedom. That makes me go crazy.

-Edgar B5

From The Beat: Do you ever get mad at yourself for allowing the system to take your freedom? Do you have any responsibility for not being able to see your sister and brother? We don't mean to be harsh, we just want you to be real.

Big Talkers, Big Yellers

What makes me mad is when people talk mess and don't do nothing. I also get mad when I make dumb mistakes and get myself in juvenile.

I also get mad when my mom yells at me for no reason, and don't sometime give me my allowance. And when Jordan buy the shoes for couple bucks and sell them for more in the U.S.

-No Street B1

From The Beat: Why does your mom yell at you? It's not just Jordan that makes products cheap and sells them high. It's almost everything we buy!

People Talking Smack

What makes me mad is when people talk shhhh behind my back and won't say shhhh to my face when I'm around. And when people be talking hella shhhh with an annoying voice.

I get mad when my mom be searching my room for some weed or drink and messing with all my stuff.

-A-Pon B2

From The Beat: In most cases, if a person is talking shhhh, it's someone you don't want to deal with anyway. Can you avoid problems by just ignoring this crap even though it makes you mad? Unfortunately, until you are grown and pay your own bills, you have to deal with your mom going through your stuff. By the way, why do you think she looks, and does she ever find anything?

Incarceration

What makes me mad? Off top, you know being in here makes me get mad, plus the stuff that's going on at home, family problems, and being away from the 'hood, 'cause a ninja miss standing on the corna and doing it big, every day like it's no tomorrow. Stayin' tucked all day and not being able to these things just get me more mad. Rest in peace to the fallen souljas.

-Young CD B2

From The Beat: Off top, if you don't like being in the Halls, why do you keep putting yourself in a position to be sent there? Could being away from the 'hood be a good thing seeing all the violence going on? We guess the real question is if being on the corner is worth your freedom and/or your life. Is it?

"What Makes You Mad?"

Mad

Shhhh! I'm locked up, incarcerated. Looking at four walls is hell, but I'm paying the price for what I did.

Pops visits when he can. Moms don't come, but that's good because I don't want her to see me locked up in all green not matching.

I can't smoke. I'm mad as hell.

-C-Newt B4

From The Beat: Who are you so mad at? You can't change the things that make you mad in here, but you can change the things that make you mad inside yourself — the things that lead you here. When you get out, will you change anything so you don't have to stare at four walls again?

The System Makes Me Mad

I can say this system makes me mad because they is forever trying to play people just to make money. At the same time I make myself mad because I brought myself here. Aint' that some shhhh.

-Juice-Loo B5

From The Beat: Are you madder at the system or yourself? If you use being mad to motivate change, then go ahead, be mad!

What Makes Me Mad

What makes me mad is when somebody says something to me or to my ninja. 'cause when you say something to them, you "have" to say something to me.

When the PO tells me some shhhh that I do not want to hear, like I am not going to be home for my b-day, and when my mom tells me some shhhh about my ninja, like when my Big Bra Lee got killed, that right there really made me mad as hell. I wanted to beat somebody's ass.

And it makes me mad when people who do not know me try to tell me what to do or how to do it. So that's what makes me mad. So stay up young ones.

-J-Stub B2

From The Beat: We understand you wanting to defend your ninjas, but can't they speak for themselves? When your PO says you won't be home for your birthday, who are you mad at, them or you? Who can give you advice, your mom, an older ninja, someone who's been in your situation?

Just My Girlfriend

The only thing that makes me mad is my girlfriend, because one day in the morning I was calling my girlfriend to come out, but she said she got something to do with her parents, and then I said, "That's okay."

But the next day I was calling her to come out, and she said, "I got something to do with my parents," but that day I see her at somewhere and then I ask her, "Can I come with you?" but she said, "No." And then I got very mad with what she did, so then as I be home, I call her and said, "We gotta break up" because you want to play with your friend and you don't want to play with me.

-Mei B2

From The Beat: Sounds like a relationship that was working out. Getting hurt in love is never nice, but now you'll be available to meet someone else who will treat you better.

I Get Mad Easy

Every time I'm inside my room I'm mad. I get mad hella easy, especially if something happens to my family. I get mad when people make fun of me.

-Jomar B2

From The Beat: What can you do to avoid that room in the future? Why do you think you get mad so easily?



"What Makes You Mad?"

Police And Lockdown

What makes me mad is when police be rolling up on the homeboys' spot and mess wit' us for no reason — and they start violating our probation!

And what also gets me mad is when I'm in here. I promised I wouldn't come back, but I got caught up with a gun. Change is hard, but I'm gonna try!

To all the homeboys on lockdown, stay up.

-Lil' Creepy

From The Beat: You can't keep the same playgrounds, playmates and playthings — and still expect to change. You need to break away and try something new, like making new friends at school.

Mad

What makes me mad is when the POs is quick to recommend placement when he's looked at your past history or your parents' past history and automatically thinks she should be in out-of-home placement.

They don't look at it from your perspective; they don't take time out to have a conversation with you regarding your case or what's going on in your life, and what you're repeating to get into trouble.

But yeah, that's what makes me mad, when they're quick to send you off.

-Bt

From The Beat: It's frustrating when your perspective isn't heard. Why do you think a PO might think sending you to an out-of-home placement would be good? Do you think they believe it might be easier for a person to change their lifestyle when they're in a different environment than the one that got them caught up? What do you think a better solution would be?

Really Makes Me Mad

what makes me mad
is when people stay havin'
my name in thei' mouth

like it's platinum

what really makes me irate

is when these fake

people get mad at me

for somethin' or other that be

off the wall

and it be so funny

'cause all i do is smile

at these fake people

and they get me mad especially

when they be playing

some little childish games

when they try to be on the same

level as me and sure as hell

know they ain't got me real mad

but it does make me mad

when certain females try to be like me

knowin' they can never succeed

and that's what really

makes me mad

-Lil' Mama Hanna

From The Beat: Guess we asked for you to bring this heat, but this is a lot like the hater poem you wrote last week. Not to say it's the same, but you're still focused the same childish games. Don't give them so much attention; next week they don't even need to be mentioned. Write about you and what you want to do with your life, 'cause they're just

Short Tempered

I could say a lot of things make me mad because I have a short temper, a lot of stuff gets on my nerves. Either I don't get along with someone, or we disagree on something, or things don't go my way. An' being incarcerated makes me mad.

-B-Bo

From The Beat: Thanks for your honesty. How can you be more chill in a healthy way? Do you think you have a lot of anger stored up from the past? If you don't want to live like this, we suggest you start looking at the past and working through it by writing or talking about it.

**that's what makes me
mad, when they're quick
to send you off.**

Makes Me Mad

The thing that gets me mad is being in here and knowing that I can do better in school and at home. I just think about things that I need to work on while I'm in here doing time.

-Trying

From The Beat: What can you do to make it so that your home life and your education are in good standing?

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Mad Thoughts

it makes me mad

when i see

people crying and lying

it makes me mad

when i hear

people lying a lot

it makes me mad

to think about my family

-Davaé

From The Beat: Did you lie to yourself about the game? Will you act different when you're free again — to spare you and your family this same old pain?

Mad I Cannot Enjoy My Life

What makes me mad is to be in jail for something I did not do, eating this food, can't watch TV when I would like to, cannot go out and play with my friend, can't go to the baseball games, cannot enjoy my life because the police need someone to put something on.

-Johnny

From The Beat: After you get out and make sure you cover all your bases or take care of all you need to take of, you will be able to enjoy your life again. Till then, make the most of your time.

What Makes Me Mad

Well what's making me mad is that I keep on coming back to jail. And why? Because of shhh I've done in the past that happened one year ago. But I cannot be mad at anyone but myself.

But I will be back at it once again, and I hope soon, but that's what's really making me mad. But when I go back home I will stay home because me, I have two kids and when you have kids, you have to be at home to take good care of them.

-Lil' BG

From The Beat: You start to see reality and your responsibility at the end. But we are concerned that your habits may get the best of you and your kids will be father-less once again. How can you really let go of this life once and for all? Your kids are waiting for you.

Wrong Decisions

I usually make myself mad from the wrong decisions. I also make myself mad because I got locked up seven times and now I'm looking at CYA and I don't want to go there, but if I do, I could do one year or four-and-a-half years.

My PO is trying to get me in a placement before my court date, so they'll be more likely to give me another chance.

-Lil' Ant

From The Beat: We wish you the best with getting in a placement. In the future, what can you do to make sure that you don't end up in the same predicament again?

What Makes Me Mad?

What makes me mad is when an ignorant person thinks he knows everything.

What makes me mad, when a person doesn't respect me.

What makes me mad, when the DA doesn't give a damn about what happens to my life.

What makes me mad, when a person gives up on themselves and life.

-Abbas

From The Beat: Those things would make us mad too. It seems that the way you stay happy is by knowing who you are and staying in control of your own beliefs and emotions. We wonder why some Das might come off like they don't care. Do you know why? How have you seen others give up on themselves and life?

I Didn't Do It

things that make me mad

are like right now

i'm sitting in a cell

for something i didn't do

and that makes me mad

and when i go to court

they don't let me go home

the judge still want' me

to do time

and he don't even know

what is going on

and i can't see my family

when i want to

that make' me mad too

and every day just

thinking about stuff i could be doing

on the outs with my brothers

that make' me real mad

but i just hold it in

so i won't lose my temper

and go off on people

-Young Lee

From The Beat: It sounds like you have a lot of good reasons to get mad. But maybe you need to see that however unjust the system or blind the judge, the life you were living kept putting you in harm's way. Get mad at the chances you take — and change the how you work, think, and play. For your own sake!



Help Offered Is Help Returned

I'll choose a caring heart 'cause when you help people, help is gonna come back to you when you need it. If you do something good for somebody no matter what, somebody also is gonna do something good for you.

-Pastrulo B1

From The Beat: This is a wonderful philosophy, Pastrulo. Do you also think it works in the other direction, too? If you do something bad to somebody, then somebody will do something bad to you?

The Things I Can Do With An Intelligent Mind

I think that I would rather have an intelligent mind because I feel that without intelligence, it is going to be hard to get to where you want to go in life, and I plan on moving on from this point in my life and finishing school and getting my priorities straight.

-Young Gino GU

From The Beat: Besides getting an education, what are your priorities in life? Do you think someone could make it in life with just a caring heart?

Head Over Heart

If I could only have one out of intelligence or a caring heart, that would not have to go through my mind for too long because it ain't nothing to think about. I would take the intelligent mind.

Where the hell caring for people gon get you in this world of hate? People to feel that they care about everyone always get played because they gullible.

Now when you are intelligent, you can see through all the games people play in the game of life. And that fits into everybody's life, from people in the offices to the people on the block, because it's people out to get you everywhere, if it's moving on the ladder up above you, or a person plotting to take the little bit you got on the block.

-Leek B5

From The Beat: Yes, people who care about others do sometimes get played, but to them, it's worth it. The rewards of a caring heart are many other hearts caring about you, so getting played from time to time by those who take advantage is just one of the prices that caring people are willing to pay. Who do you care about? Do you ever feel pain for that caring? Is it worth

How Intelligent The Mind Is

I think that if I had to choose between a an intelligent mind and a caring heart, I would pick an intelligent mind because I think that a small mind is a terrible thing to waste.

If I could go back, then I would have to realize that drugs is not all that good. I'd be in school, work, etc. because an intelligent mind would not let you do stupid things to take your freedom away. You would be studying, practicing on sports and tests in school.

I truly believe that an intelligent mind will take you a long way in life to stay successful.

-Mungus B5

From The Beat: We agree that intelligence is something that can take you far in the world. But it is not enough. We know many intelligent people who have never accomplished anything in life because they don't have determination and perseverance. We think that you have the intelligence to be successful. The question is, do you have the will?

Choosing Between Intelligence Or A Caring Heart

I look at this topic and it's hard to choose. How are you going to choose if you got both?

Someone probably say, "Look at this guy, he in jail!" But I'm a human being, and every human being makes mistakes. Either it's little or big. In my case it was big.

Like they say, only the strong survive. But me, it's only the strong survive, not by being buff or knowing how to fight. It's by having an intelligent or smart mind and a caring heart, to make the choices in your life.

-JD B5

From The Beat: Absolutely, JD, a great mind can be put to terrible uses without a caring heart to guide it. The mind we're born with is the mind we're stuck with (more or less), but how does a heart develop? What turns some hearts cold while others become caring? What would you do to develop a caring heart in a child of yours?

"Intelligent Mind or Caring Heart"

Intelligent Mind Over Caring Heart

I would choose an intelligent mind over a caring heart because of the fact I have and had a caring heart, and people took advantage of it. And for that reason I started being cruel to people who don't deserve being treated cruelly.

And if I have an intelligent mind, I could think before I act, because a lot of people take my kindness for weakness and I'm really not the person to be messed with on that tip.

-Megan GU

From The Beat: Being kind to the wrong people can backfire, but being intelligent about your kindness may be helpful.

without
intelligence, it is
going to be hard
to get to where you
want to go in life

Falling Into Place

I want to have an intelligent mind instead of a caring heart, 'cause I think that if you intelligent, the caring part will fall into place.

What makes me mad is females looking at me too damn long and females calling black girls black monkeys.

-Real GU

From The Beat: Interesting idea, that if you're intelligent a caring heart will come. Having a caring heart is definitely the smart thing. And what can we say about name-calling? It's just stupid and not worth paying attention to.

Intelligent Mind or Caring Heart

If I had to choose between having an intelligent mind or caring heart, I would choose having an intelligent mind because when you have a good mind you could get a good job. People will show they represent towards you. That is it.

-Edgar B5

From the Beat: How would you describe yourself today? Do you have a caring heart? An intelligent mind? Can people work to make their hearts care? How?

Caring Means Pain

I would choose to be intelligent. If I had a greater gift of intelligence, I would be able to overcome all obstacles in my path. I would also have the wisdom to set in motion the events necessary for me to achieve my goals and insure the best possible future.

In this world, having a caring heart will only bring you a life of great pain. Those who care lose who they care about.

-Anonymous B4

From The Beat: Intelligence can help overcome many things, but life will always present difficulties. The heart is a different matter. It does break and cause pain, but it also gives meaning and causes great joy. Do you think you can protect yourself from pain by not caring?



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"Intellegent Mind or Caring Heart"

Caring Heart

I would choose a caring heart because when you have a caring heart, other things will fall into place like being intelligent, etc...

-Johnny

From The Beat: Good point. How do you have a caring heart?

Intelligent Or Kind-Hearted

Intelligent or kind-hearted? Intelligent, because I don't have a caring heart.

I'm already intelligent and don't really care about nobody but my family.

-Intelligent

From The Beat: Are you really intelligent if you're sitting in Juvenile Hall?

A Combination Of The Both

It's good to have an intelligent mind. The reason why I say this is because smarter people in this world get better jobs and people who is hiring look for people with more education and common sense.

Why be caring while you can be caring and intelligent at the same time? See, I figure that an intelligent person could get away with anything because an intelligent person would check what he's doing, for example; people take tests and the stupid guys who finish first never check the answer.

-Chyenney

From The Beat: We do agree that slow and steady wins the race! But, just because someone doesn't take their time on a test, does that really make them stupid? What if they're just not interested in the material?

To Be Intelligent

I would pick intelligent, because I would rather use my mind so I won't get into any more trouble with the law. But also, if you have intelligence it could take you a long way in school. That's why I would pick intelligence.

-George

From The Beat: You have intelligence. We can tell based on your answer. What is it that you need to do, or stop doing, in order to stop getting into trouble with the law? You're intelligent — start making intelligent decisions.

Heart And Mind

the person i know
with the biggest heart
is my mother
the smartest person i know
is my mother
right now i wish
i could talk to my mother

-Davaé

From The Beat: You have an idea of the sort of thing she would say. Use the love and wisdom she's already planted in your heart. It's not the same as being with her, but it's a start.

Intelligent Vs. Caring

I'd rather choose an intelligent mind because that will lead me in life to stay out of incarceration. Also because it will give me something to do, by reading or writing, lookin' up words that I never heard of, that kind of stuff.

-B-Bo

From The Beat: This is a great idea to further your education and read. Knowledge is power.

Intelligent Brain Over Weakness And Love

I would choose an intelligent brain over a caring heart, because I believe that caring is a weakness and love always turns into hate and emptiness. So I have learned with my intelligent brain that just don't do it, because it is always mistaken for weakness. So I use the respect method, I respect you till you disrespect me.

-James

From The Beat: We see your point and know that love sometimes turns bad. How has it turned bad for you in the past? Can you also see the other side and that it takes a strong person to open their heart instead of building walls around it? Wouldn't that be real weakness?



Both Intelligence And A Caring Heart

Between an intelligent mind or a carrying heart, I would want both of them. Because intelligence brings knowledge and without knowledge life wouldn't be perfect. And without a caring heart, intelligence isn't important. Also a caring heart can bring people knowledge.

-Abbas

From The Beat: Good point. Attributes such as compassion and love give wisdom. You are a very wise person, Abbas.

Having A Loving And Caring Heart

I have a loving and caring heart for people 'cause I care for a whole lot of people. Sometimes I wish I can just help poor people and everyone else. Also, my baby-boy Marcus. I hope that someday he will change his life around, 'cause if he don't, then someday he will end up dead or in prison for life. And I don't want that to happen to him at all. So what I am going to do is help him get through the hard times.

Oh yeah, and for my sister, Toya, keep your head up sis, it's me, your big sis, in the other unit. Oh yeah, Marcus, I love you with all my heart, pooh bear. I just want you to know that I'm still here boo. I hope that you don't run from your group home pooh bear.

Oh, and I haven't forgot about my brother, Deandre. I want my brother to know that I care for him a whole lot.

Oh, and my mom, I love her, too, she's my everything. I don't know what I would do without her. If somebody was to hurt my mom, I would kill myself.

Oh yeah, and my sister, Lanny. I care for her, too, she might not think I do, but I do. Love, Sharetta.

-Sharetta

From The Beat: You do have a loving and caring heart. We hope that you have told all of these people how you feel. You should share this piece with them.

Intelligent Mind And Being Mad

I rather have an intelligent mind than a caring heart because you can work on being caring, 'cause there's not that much intelligent people around.

Things that make me mad is when people talk about my dad because he died not too long ago and it just makes me blackout and hurt people when people run their mouths.

It's hard being locked up and just thinking about yo' family. But I'm about to go home so I'm gonna keep it cool for a while.

-Erik

From The Beat: Sounds like you already have a caring heart. You also have an intelligent mind, but the mind requires maintenance. You need to make intelligent decisions, exercise that intelligence.

**I have a loving
and caring
heart for
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people.**



What's Up

Whats up with y'all in The Beat? This is your boy T-Maine. I hope that everybody is safe in the Hall. Last week I did not get to finish my piece so I will write a new one.

I am walkin' but I am not goin' nowhere,
When I talk, every word sound funny and everybody stare,
When I breathe, the air taste so stale to me,
Could it be 'cause I am in the Hall, for what feel like a lifetime to me?
Why is it that this is like a game to me?
They threw the power switch on and you take off and go,
By the time you realize what you got goin',
They try to play you though.

-T-Maine

From The Beat: Why is it that this is like a game to you? You are an intelligent guy, why do you feel this way? We look forward to reading your pieces week after week. But, where are you? What are you thinking about? What's going on in your head? We're listening.

Dank Day

4:20 is the official "Dank Day" all around the world. To smoke is a holiday when they blow hella weed. To others it's an ordinary day, when they smoke like it's an everyday thang. I wonder who made up 4:20 and why? I don't know, "The world may never know." Others are clueless about 4:20. They say they never heard of it, but I doubt that.

There's different names for it, Ganja, mota, weed, dank, pot, light green, gran daddy, purple, and so on . . . And there's humble county, white widow, Jack Frost, train wreck, and sticky icky stuff.

Well, that's it for today until the next.

-Lil' John

From The Beat: It's amazing how much you know about lettuce! (Betcha forgot that one!) If you directed your energy towards something more positive, you'd be surprised how far you could get in life!

What Up, Homies

What up, homies? This that homeboy Gato again chillin' with my homie in max. I want to say what's up to all the homies at Camp in the Hall and in the "Y."

To every homie stay strong and keep your head up. Stay on your toes and keep representin' to the fullest. There ain't no stoppin' us, it's just going to get bigger and bigger.

-Young Gato

From The Beat: Why would you keep doing something that can only get you in two boxes — a jail cell or a grave? Wake up! The only that gets bigger because of gangbanging is the CDC!

the 'hood kickin' it with the homies, soakin' on some forties of King Cobra or Old English.

My dreams seem so real, but when they wake me up for wash up, I'm back to the cold reality. But getting locked up is all a part of the game; it's one of the sacrifices you take for being a gangbanger from the bay. It's all like a roll of dice, but instead you gamble with your life because there ain't no such thing as a part-time gangster. You got to take chances and make sacrifices — that's all a part of the game. I'm out for now. Alrato this is big bad gato.

-Young Gato

From The Beat: "Those who choose to play — will pay" — an old saying. If you know the consequences, then it's a conscious decision. You want to make freedom choices — not "free dumb" choices. Do you see yourself gambling with your life for the rest of your life? Are you sure you're not gambling with death?

Going To CYA

I been here for many months and my lawyer is trying to send me to CYA for like two years and I don't want to go to CYA, but is OK. I am not trippin', that's all I have to say.

But when I get out I want to get a job and help my mom.

-Rafael

From The Beat: What can you do to make your time in CYA productive? When you get there, how can you make sure that you don't get more time added to your sentence?

Where I Could Be

Where I could be right now . . .

I could be on my spot with the homies.

I could be in the 'hood drinkin' on a 40 postin'.

I could be kickin' it with my homeboy or my cousin or with some females.

I could be at the pad sleepin' on my bed instead of these fake-ass beds.

I could be on my spot bangin' my rivals.

-Green Eyes

From The Beat: Have you ever thought that maybe being in Juvenile Hall is actually saving you from something worse? Like death . . .

Got Caught

Okay, I'm here to tell you how I got caught. It all started like this: When I was walking home from Hayward Bart I had a blunt and I wanted to smoke so I posted at Cesar Chavez Middle School. So I walked to the back and saw a 22 long rifle, so I picked it up, and along with it was 50 bullets, so I took it.

The next day I was shooting it about 20 times, and after a while it got hot but I didn't care, so while I was shooting it in my apartment, there was a cop in my parking lot. I loaded the gun when the cop came from behind me and scared me and I shot the gun on accident. So she pulled out her .45. I thought I was going to get shot.

But she didn't, so as she said drop the gun. I ran and about three miles away I got caught and now I'm in the Hall. I was charged with possession of a loaded firearm and discharge of a gun and now I'm facing three years in San Quentin, but luckily the gun came back clean on file, no murder on it.

-Lil' Slim

From The Beat: You are so lucky that it came back clean — you could have been washed! What on earth made you pick up a gun that you found? You should have a little more common sense than that! What will you do the next time around when you're faced with such ill temptations? Have you learned a lesson from this experience?

Affiliated

What does it mean to look "affiliated"?

I know when a person is affiliated by the way they dressed, the way they look and the way they act towards you, and tattoos.

If they're your homies, you will know the way they act towards you. And if they're enemies, you won't like the way they talk.

-L

From The Beat: Do you think it is good it is so easy to identify someone who's "affiliated"? Do you think the police profile the same way?

Free Me From These Walls

The only thing that frees me from these walls is my dreams. I have all kinds of dreams when I go to sleep. I have dreams of being free on the outs. I dream of being in

the 'hood kickin' it with the homies, soakin' on some forties of King Cobra or Old English.

My dreams seem so real, but when they wake me up for wash up, I'm back to the cold reality. But getting locked up is all a part of the game; it's one of the sacrifices you take for being a gangbanger from the bay. It's all like a roll of dice, but instead you gamble with your life because there ain't no such thing as a part-time gangster. You got to take chances and make sacrifices — that's all a part of the game. I'm out for now. Alrato this is big bad gato.

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From The Beat: "Those who choose to play — will pay" — an old saying. If you know the consequences, then it's a conscious decision. You want to make freedom choices — not "free dumb" choices. Do you see yourself gambling with your life for the rest of your life? Are you sure you're not gambling with death?

What's Up, Beat?

What's up, Beat? I am just in here chillin' like a villain. Man, do you want to know what makes me mad? Being in this place.

I am back again for the sixth time. But I am lucky because I am back to the camp house, but this time I am going to pimp my program for four months. But I am not going to say no more, but I'll holla.

-Tony

From The Beat: Aight, do yo' thang, pimp it. But six times? Once you're done with your time here in the Hall, how you gonna pimp life? How are you going to take control of your life? It makes you mad being locked up in the Hall, how are you going to prevent this situation from happening again? Is that possible?

My Release

I just talked to my probation officer about three weeks ago, and she told me that I am getting released on June eleventh.

And when I get out, I just can't wait till I can just be kickin' it with all of my homeboys. But also when I kick it with them, I am not going to be getting into any trouble.

-Chubbs

From The Beat: If all you have to look forward to is drinking, smoking, and kicking it with the homeboys, how long will it be before there's trouble? Don't you have any productive plans to help you get your life in order? Otherwise you'll be taking orders in the system.

My dreams seem so real, but when they wake me up for wash up, I'm back to the cold reality.

Court

Yeah, what's up homeboys, this the big homie Green Eyes just postin' up in max. I went to court today.

Now I got to take it to trial. If I beat the case, I'll probably go back to Camp. But if I lose the case, they're gonna send me to CYA 'cause I was at Camp with a YA commitment and I caught a case.

Somehow my name got in the mix. I ain't stressin' if they send me to YA, I am just gonna have to go and do my thing. I might not see my varrio for a little while.

The only part I am trippin' off of is doin' time for some other person if I lose my case. But I ain't no snitch! Feel me! This homeboy's out!

-Green Eyes

From The Beat: Sometimes being at the wrong place at the wrong time can get you in some deep shhh. In the future, can you protect yourself from getting caught up for someone else? Someone once said, "show me your company and I'll show you who you are." Sumptin' to think about . . .



My Last Drunkalogue In The Beat, Promise

Chucky Balls was drunk. Yeah, this Yung Lazy, 'bout to drop a few lines about this J-cat, Chucky Balls. Yeah, this foo' was hella drunk, thinking he was a pimp with this little female from his varrio.

First we was at the little corner barbecue, and it was cracking until the brew was gone. So we cut and went to another party, drank their beer and cut from there, too — but to my homeboy's place.

But yeah, let me stick to my point, 'cause this thang right here is basically to clown on my partna Chucky Balls. He was off the hook that night, dropping bottles before we even got to crack 'em open! Falling all over the place and slapping up against females. Much love, homie. And to all the homies in the Hall. Don't trip. Alratos.

-Lazy
From The Beat: We'll hold you to that promise! 'Cause if you've made one thing clear, it's that you do like your brew. And you know we still get worried about you and your crew doing stupid things without a clue 'cause you're too messed up to know what not to do. Meanwhile, check out Chucky's piece on you!

I'm Back Here Again

Man, I'm back in this place again, and I'm hella mad! The other day when I went to court, I knew I was coming back again.

So I had to just go and do what the staff say. And then they're going to send me to Camp. They gave me six months in there.

-Lil' Corn
From The Beat: When the system's all up in your face, how do you lift your eyes to see a better way of life? Some manage to do it at Camp. Others just passed time or else ran. What about you? Tired of playin' a foo'?

Coming Back

Can't believe I'm back. I had told myself I ain't never coming back. I shouldn't got drunk. The consequences was getting caught by 5.0.

Man, now I face a placement, which I hope they accept me, so I could get outta here. I know that being in here is like hell, but ain't nothing I could do but keep it cool, feel me?

Well, those who getting released, try to not get caught up in the mix. 'Cause I know I am about to be here for a while. But I know I ain't doing life, so it's all gravy. Late.

-Maria
From The Beat: Maria, why do you think you keep coming back? Getting drunk may not seem like a big deal, but now that you realize that helped get you locked up, what will it take for you to stay away from alcohol? Do you think you need help keeping your alcohol use under control? If so, ask for help. What else do you need to do to keep that promise this time?

try to not get caught up in the mix

Don't Trip Like This

Yeah, this is Young Chucky 'bout to tell the homies what's up. Last weekend I went to kick it with a female. The homeboy Lazy came through to the female's place and he flipped 'cause he thought I was saving her.

So he started tripping, talking about, he's gonna go do his own thing. And he like, "You do your thing with her!" But it wasn't like that. Nah, the female had said it wasn't cuts to kick it at her house 'cause last week all the homies ran through that house.

So we ended up cutting to a party and got hella drunk. Then Lazy start acting stupid, so I cut to do my curfew call early. I don't know what he ended up doing. To all the homeboys, don't be like Lazy, tripping over a female. It wasn't even like that anyway.

-Chucky
From The Beat: Only 'cause we know you and Lazy are close, and there're no hard feelings fashow, will we print this battle in prose: each of you clowning the other's partying woes. But you both need to slow your roll before you party out of control and lose this little bit of freedom that you hold. Weekends are to practice living free and responsibly, not playing on the edge of catastrophe.

Last Time

This probably my last two weeks up in this place. I been here for nine months and I never thought I would be here for my B-day. I should be kicking it with my ninjas trying to make the block crack.

Peep game, if ya like being free, when you come and get straight release — don't come back, this shhh ain't cool. This is — yes, like a daycare; it's wasting your time. I learned the 5th time up in here — I'm going to try to pimp the group home so I can get out. Can you understand me?

-Mexican
From The Beat: Do you think that being out on the block tryna make it crack might interfere with your plans to never come back to the Hall? Just think about it . . .

Just 'cause
you a giant
don't mean
you have
to stomp
through the
valley.

In Five Years

In 5 years I would probably be in the "Y" or in the pen'. I would probably be on my spot kickin' it.

In 5 years I would probably be dead or in prison for life. In 5 years I would be . . . shhh I don't even know

I guess I'll just have to wait and find out.

-Green Eyes
From The Beat: Ask yourself, what on earth is really worth giving up your freedom, being told what to do 24/7, when to poot, when to sleep and when to eat?

Finally

I have served my time now and will be getting released within the next week. I'm glad to be getting out of here and to start my life again.

I have done a lot of thinking since I have been locked up, and I realize that I made a lot of messed up choices that affected not only me but also my friends and family.

I'm glad I've made a decision to change my course of actions to better my chances at a better life.

-Nick
From The Beat: Honestly, it takes great courage to admit your errors and face up to your mistakes. And greater courage to make that decision to change your course of actions! It won't happen overnight, but you will have a better life. Meanwhile, give yourself props every day for choosing to live the right way!

What's Up Beat!

This is Lil' Monster smashing from the Hall, just writing one more time before I leave. I get out tomorrow. Finally I'm out of this weak place.

Before I leave, I just wanna say late' to the homies that are locked up with; you know who you are. Be coo' and stay with the program, homies. I'm outs. RIP Speedy.

-Lil' Monster
From The Beat: You need to start smashing the books instead of rivals' sideways looks. Doing a good program is cool, but if you hit the spot instead of school, you'll be back feeling like a fool.

REP

Ay, when you left, it really hurt,
And now you're in the ground
Under six feet of dirt.

Me and the homies won't stop reminiscing,

Off a down-ass vato,

Pero, it is you we are missing,

Now we're all sitting,

Confessing our feelings,

Just thinking of the past,

Simon, we had a blast.

-Joker
From The Beat: Joker, we all know what it's like to experience the loss of a loved one. You day you're reminiscing on the good times, but does your homie's death make you reflect on your own life and your decisions? Do you think about how long you'll be on this earth if you keep living this life?

What's Cracking?

It's the homeboy, Lil' Juanito, still smashing from the Hall. But I get out Friday, hopefully.

Man, my homeboy Cachetes went to the Y today. My other homeboy Baby Rube got sentenced to three years, and he'll be up there soon. Well, I just want to say, "What's cracking?" to all the homeboys in the Hall.

-Silent Kidda
From The Beat: Why can't you see that if you still want to be smashing with the homies, you'll be following Cachetes and Baby Rube? It's not a question of whether but how soon. Or you could decide to try change; it's up to you.

Why?

Why these girls lookin' at me?

These girls stare like I'm a big glamour

These girls act like I pose to cater,

Girls, ain't nobody got to cater to you.

Girls, I'll step on you but like my pops said,
Just 'cause you a giant don't mean you have to

stomp through the valley.

-Alainia
From The Beat: We understand your frustration, but what can you do to just let all this drama go? Can you be a giant who doesn't step on folks, but who recognizes that she's above the pettiness?

Bye

bye 'cause

i'm out

don't want to

come back

to juvenile hall

drought

gon' be good

gon' to school

like i should

only three days

away

-Taneisha
From The Beat: Congrats on being out, and we're glad you've got positive plans to be about.



Puppet Of The System

I'm a puppet of the system,
I wish the system could be my puppet,
If I cry, they laugh,
If I hate, it they love it,
Why do the system gotta be this way?
Especially the judge and the DA
They want us to be losers,
They like to see our face,
That's why when you ask for a release,
They say, "no, not today."
They say, "placement sounds nice"
Why? They know we gon' run
Send her to the streets,
Why they know you gon' get a gun?
That's shady how they be,
All they do is downgrade me.
Screw it that's fine,
I won't be here a lifetime.

-Da Real Lil' Mama

From The Beat: Is there a way out of being the puppet? Do you feel like the system is a trap? Why are you in the Hall? Is it because a problem within the system or is it a problem with you, or both? Who is responsible? How can you beat the system, make it your puppet?

Purple Bunnies

the little purple bunnies
have risen from the dead
they have no eyes
but still see out of their heads
some of them have one arm
and some have none
but they manage to run freely
for all they have done
they all have one ear
and all have no nose
but that one ear
s'as long as a hose
they're very nice
but also very mean
they can be very messy
but also very clean

-Diego

From The Beat: They sound both cute and creepy! Maybe a little too nightmarish to invite in bed with you when you're sleepy. But it sure made us laugh to see an ear like the neck of a giraffe! You are so creative.

Do You Remember

do you remember when we
first made love in the bedroom
do you remember when we
first had our kisses
and you wouldn't stop at all
do you remember when i told you
i needed a break for some time
that was very wrong of me
what i did to you baby
i know you remember
the good times we had together
remember when i went to go see
your mom for my first time at your house
she liked me off the top
do you remember when i
told you i love you
baby girl i never told a girl that in my life
so that was very hard for me to say
i still meant that too
i know you remember when you
kissed your old boyfriend
when someone told me that
i didn't know what to do at that moment
do you remember when i
forgave you for that
baby do you remember all
we been through
because i do

-Lil' Man

From The Beat: Your poem brings us all the way to today, from love's first flowering to your being locked away — yet you don't say what a strain lockdown must put on her heart and yours. When you get out, we hope you follow the right course — after all you've been through, you owe it to both her and you.

Do Too Much Boyz

yes sir do too much records
presents do too much boyz
LRC and young mastermind
bringin' you real street heat
true street bangers
the shhh we spit gon' leave ya mind hangin'
real street shhh we been through
present things we stompin through too
holla back atcha boyz
doin' too much in effect yeeeeehehh

-Pastor J-Wizzle

From The Beat: There are enough gangster rap stars to inspire another generation to spend life behind bars. So we hope when you're spittin' the real, you don't just add to the toll, ya feel! Point to a better way than killing and dying in the street, okay?

Green Monster

little mushrooms
and a fluffy cloud
a merry-go-round
and a noise so loud
the noise was there
and is no longer
a green little monster
seems much stronger
it has little arms
and very tiny legs
and it has tentacles
and red-shaped eyes
like eggs

-Diego

From The Beat: Wherever you find the inspiration for these lyrics, they're full of imagination and a creative spirit — and they're always a little scary, too. What healthy ways can you deal with the scary, sad or angry moments in your life?

they manage to
run freely
for all they
have done

Black Man With Dreads

The police got me in jail for something I did not do;
they are trying to say I did something somewhere
when I was somewhere else at my cousin house.
They think it was me because I'm a black man with
dreads so it was me, Johnny.

-Johnny

From The Beat: Mistaken identity is a difficult thing. So is racial profiling. Do you think that this may be old stuff just catching up? We wish you luck to clear your name. How can you make your name cleaner than it is?

My Last Drunkalogue In The Beat, Promise

Chucky Balls was drunk. Yeah, this Yung Lazy, 'bout to drop a few lines about this J-cat, Chucky Balls. Yeah, this foo' was hella drunk, thinking he was a pimp with this little female from his varrio.

First we was at the little corner barbecue, and it was cracking until the brew was gone. So we cut and went to another party, drank their beer and cut from there, too — back to my homeboy's place.

But yeah, let me stick to my point, 'cause this thang right here is basically to clown on my patna Chucky Balls. He was off the hook that night, dropping bottles before we even got to crack 'em open! Falling all over the place and being wit' females.

Much love, homie. And to all the homies in the hall. Don't trip. Alratos.

-Lazy

From The Beat: We'll hold you to that promise! 'Cause if you've made one thing clear, it's that you do like your brew. And you know we still get worried about you and your crew doing stupid things without a clue 'cause you're too messed up to know what not to do. Meanwhile, check out Chucky's piece on you!

Don't Trip Like This

Yeah, this is Young Chucky 'bout to tell the homies what's up. Last weekend I went to kick it with a female. The homeboy Lazy came through to the female's place and he flipped 'cause he thought I was saving her.

So he started tripping, talking about, he's gonna go do his own thing. And he like, "You do your thing with her!" But it wasn't like that. Nah, the female had said it wasn't cuts to kick it at her house 'cause last week all the homies ran through that house.

So we ended up cutting to a party and got hella drunk. Then Lazy start' acting stupid, so I cut to do my curfew call early. I don't know what he ended up doing. To all the homeboys, don't be like Lazy, tripping over a female. It wasn't even like that anyway.

-Chucky

From The Beat: Only 'cause we know you and Lazy are close, and there're no hard feelings fashow, will we print this battle in prose: each of you clowning the other's partying woes. But you both need to slow your roll before you party out of control and lose this little bit of freedom that you hold. Weekends are to practice living free and responsibly, not playing on the edge of catastrophe.

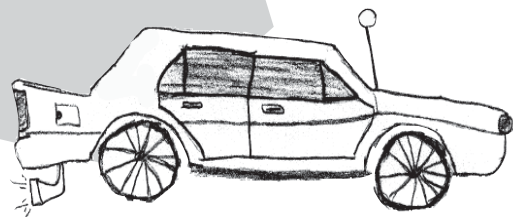
My Release

I just talked to my probation officer about a few weeks ago, and she told me that I am getting released on June eleventh.

And when I get out, I just can't wait till I can just be kickin' it with all of my homeboys. But also when I kick it with them, I am not going to be getting into any trouble.

-Chubbs

From The Beat: If all you have to look forward to is drinking, smoking, and kicking it with the homeboys, how long will it be before there's trouble? Don't you have any productive plans to help you get your life in order? Otherwise you'll be taking orders in the system.





Three Different Answers To: Why Not Be Real?

[Tis = Tishay; Ha = Hanna; Ty = Tyresha]

Tis — I don't know. That's what I live by.
Ty — Can't they see I don't like to waste time.
Ha — 'Cause sometimes it makes me cry.
Tis — But it's the only way to get by.
Ty — I stay real. I never lie.
Ha — 'Cause that's how they get down.
Tis — I mean, we come real, 'cause that's what we found.
Ty — I say, I'm real, screaming out loud!
Ha — Hey, we stay real, but we can get wild.
Tis — I'm brought up real as being a child.
Ty — We gon' stay real till we die.
Ha — So why not be real?
Tis — I'm just asking why.

-Tishay, Hanna and Tyresha

From The Beat: When you three slam it, the group dynamic, is something to feel! After reading you, what else is there to do? Why not be real!

What Is A Pimp?

Is a pimp a man or a woman? Shhh, I'll tell you what a pimp is. A pimp is the staff that work in jails. The reason why I say staff is if you see it the way I see it. They pimpin' you detainees in jail 'cause they tell you when to eat, take a shhh, when not to shit... They tell you to go to your room, when to sleep, when you don't want to sleep...

For the detainees in jail, you are not a pimp, you are a ho because you gave your pimpin' licenses up when you came to jail. Like my great grandpa told me, "pimps up ho's down."

-Donta

From The Beat: The system may be the main pimp, and remember not all the counselors are power hungry. It would be like saying all Black people are criminals. It's an unfair stereotype. We do give up our licenses when we go to jail but that isn't a reason to call all of the people locked up ho's either, 'cause some people keep their dignity, learn, and respect themselves and others while locked up. Remember that includes you.

Food

the first food
i want to eat
is anything i see

-Davaé
From The Beat: Omnivorous!

Home

the first place
i want to go
when i get out
is home

-Davaé
From The Beat: May it be so.

Purple Bunnies

the little purple bunnies
have risen from the dead
they have no eyes
but still see out of their heads
some of them have one arm
and some have none
but they manage to run freely
for all they have done
they all have one ear
and all have no nose
but that one's ears
are as long as a hose
they're very nice
but also very mean
they can be very messy
but also very clean

-Diego

From The Beat: They sound both cute and creepy! Maybe a little too nightmarish to invite in bed with you when you're sleepy. But it sure made us laugh to see an ear like the neck of a giraffe!

Where I Come From

I come from a hood that worries about nothin' but money. That's all on our mind', even if we have it, we got to go and get some more. We went from bustin' knocks to hittin' licks, to 211's, car jacking, and knocking a person out. We like to shine on trick ass people that perpetrate all of their lives, and people who stand on the block all day and make a note — them kind of people.

Once we get the money, we catch our cut, with some drinks, pills, and weed. We keep it lit 24-7, pulling 211's you know, that's how I funk wit' it, some people came out as a big gangsta, those are the ones who have to put in work. Like me, I have a brother that looked after me. If he shined, I had to shine with him. It's a block thang.

You maintain and slang... then you can survive.

-B-Bo

From The Beat: You take us into what your world was like on the outs — now you have a world of concrete. Your love for money sounds like an addiction and just as bad as a cracked-out addict. Staying lit 24-7 sounds fun for a minute but then again it also sounds like you have wasted a lot of your life away. Do you ever think this? We wish your brother knew how to really look out for you because if he did, you think you would be in a better place. We know this is the life you choose to live but don't encourage others in The Beat to continue this destructive and self-destructive life.

Green Monster

little mushrooms
and a fluffy cloud
a merry-go-round
and a noise so loud
the noise was there
and is no longer
a green little monster
seems much stronger
it has little arms
and very tiny legs
and it has tentacles
and red-shaped eyes
like eggs

-Diego

From The Beat: Wherever you find the inspiration for these lyrics, they're full of imagination and a creative spirit — and they're always a little scary, too. Wonder what those eggs might hatch into?

Bye

bye 'cause
i'm out
don't want to
come back
to juvenile hall
drought
gon' be good
gon' to school
like i should
only three days
away

-Taneisha
From The Beat: Congrats on being out, and we're glad you've got positive plans to be about.

I have a
brother that
looked after
me. If he
shined, I had
to shine
with him.

Lil' Doowop Or Doowop

My name is Jamari, but people call me Lil' Doowop or Doowop. I don't know why they call me that! Well, maybe it's because I look like him or I act like him.

When I first came here, they said, "Is you Jamal's brother?" And I said, "Yes, that's my brother." It was a lady that first asked me. And soon everyone started calling me Doowop or Lil' Doowop. Whenever I went into a unit, somebody would say, "Come here, Doowop." And I would say, "I am Doowop's brother."

I miss my brother, and I can't wait till my brother get' out in April next year.

-Jamari

From The Beat: Maybe doing like Doowop used to do, is what got you locked up, too. It'd be great if the system never saw you or your brother again. But you'll give up what you did back then.

Why Lie?

i see your face
full of disgrace
boy i tell you
you'll never be my taste
not one word from your mouth
can be trusted
your heart is an open grave
you can't even act brave
with your tongue
you speak deceit
but your words
don't get to me
they don't even touch me
you seem to speak them
constantly
with velocity
but to me
they're ungainly
what you don't seem
to understand
is that you're not
goin' to make it
in the world
full of lies
those you despise
ain't goin' to let you
waste their time
but regardless
i'm still goin' to
get mine
but may i ask you
why lie?

-Tyresha

From The Beat: You give him a tongue-lashing, but not just to be smashing. Seems like you want him to learn his old ways will just get him burned. But new or old, you won't let his words turn you from the road you follow — to happiness and success!

What's Up Beat!

I go back to court tomorrow. I hope I hear something good. I'm not expecting a release — I just want good news!

Two of my homeboys are getting out soon, so I wish them luck. I'm 'a try to get off probation, so I don't have to trip over colors.

I got in a fight in here. I hope they don't say nothing in court. I've been here six times, and I still won't change. It just makes me smarter.

But I'm gonna try this time, not just for me but for my family. But I ain't gonna lie and say I'm gonna change; 'cause when I see a rival, I fight. It ain't easy, a'ight! Times up for tonight. I'm out.

-Lil' Creep

From The Beat: If you keep coming back, you're not really getting smarter. It seems like after six times here, you'd figure that out. If you keep fighting rivals on sight, you'll spend way more time in the system than you will with your family, a'ight. And that's if you don't lose your life.



Weekly Writings

San Francisco County

Volume 9.16

Page 51

4/20 Anthem

I'm sittin' on more than an o
Ready to light one or blow
Put away the Bacardi fa sho
Don't even think about touching some snow
Just kick back wit' phat one and blow
It's 4:20 and I'm up in the hall
So this anthem ain't crackin' at all

-JD B5

From The Beat: If the subject were a little different, we'd give you a piece of the week for the this very tight little tribute. As it is, we give you props for making us laugh.

Mine

My name is Young Threadz, and I miss my girl. For real, she's my heart, my soul, and my everything. I want to get out to be with my family, but I really miss my girl. So I wanna let The Beat know I love my girl.

-Young Threadz B4

From The Beat: At your age, having no girls around is true punishment. But it's worse when you are missing a particular girl, and one you care for like her. So, what changes do you think you'll be making when you get out to make sure this separation never happens again?

Don't Rush Death

Man when I get out I gotta ball out to the fullest. The Bay is ours. It's for my dons and me. We share with no outsiders. Any in our way better hop on or get rolled on.

That's what I hear 24/7. Someone's ideal life of their plan to take over. I mean life ain't no story line that could be played out like "Scarface." Only thing y'all gon have in common is death if y'all try that on these streets.

An' if y'all the ones that consider death glorious, then shhh, y'all probably come up mad at the way you get taken out 'cause you could get it by one of your ninjas. Then you'll really feel bad.

I just want to say that life is precious. death is gonna come, so don't rush it.

-Peter George B5

From The Beat: How do you think some people as young as your peers come to believe that death is glorious, even after seeing so many friends get buried? Did you once consider death glorious? Why? How did you arrive at your current thinking on the subject?

To The Beat

I wanted to commend you guys on your last publication about the "system." It was a great idea and issue. But I have some other things on my mind right now, like misfortunes and mishaps.

Let's talk about bs, firsthand. Well, last week at court the DA did not show up. He had a good reason, but they postponed my court date another two weeks again, time waved. That's some crazy stuff. I've been down seven months and I still haven't had one real court date yet. Just setting to keep re-setting.

Does it aggravate me, you ask. Hell yeah! I'm not saying why me. I'm asking, what the hell is up with that?

-Peter George B5

From The Beat: We definitely feel your frustration, but the system is all about waiting — for POs to make the time to see you, for PDs to make the time to see you, for court dates to be set and reset, for programs to begin, for the doors to finally open. This is the reality of incarceration, so if you don't want to get used to it for a long, long time, it's time to do something different.

Back In The Day

The other day I was thinking about Camp Mendicino and my girlfriend that I had when I was there. It was just peachy. It was like love at first sight. I still love her till this day (she knows who she is). That was like when I was like what, a little ninja to other ninjas in this game, but I didn't let that stop me.

I'm about to be seventeen in three months, August to be exact. Still on the same case trying not to catch any more while I'm in here 'cause it's not cool anymore.

The cold part about this little shhh, the girl I'm talking about just had a birthday. Happy birthday! I just want her to know even though I got a daughter, I still love her and wish she could have had my child, a pretty little girl with Malachi's smile.

I reminisce how she used to sit on my lap all at camp and we would just talk and kiss.

But I'm getting ready to go to my little box and go to sleep, think about girl. Does this sound corny? Do you think I care what you think? Hell no, but it's almost nine and pants off, line it up, take it around, don't call off your door unless it's an emergency, or got room time like ditto, but I got to go.

-Cudabeez B5

From The Beat: Oh, Cudabeez, we've missed your quick wit and way with words. The great thing about memories is that nobody can touch them. We also love your last paragraph, because it captures what life is like in this unit, especially at the end of a Beat program. But, pants on, we got to go...

What's Up Beat?

How you be? I just got off a shady split program been on like a coo' month and a half for some bs that got the unit on lock down and a whole bunch of bs.

But when you somewhat prove to staff that you can be around people without fighting, then you good. They will just have a certain respect for you, and will give, and also get what you want and need.

So basically got to stay the hell out of trouble and out the way. Don't be a follower be a leader. I read something my granny always told me, "If you are going to be an Indian, be the chief. I really did not know what that meant before, but now I do.

Take heed to me and be easy in the streets. Don't get mounted. So I'm gone, but not for long.

-Cudabeez B5

From The Beat: Well, you've been gone for hecka long. We're glad to have you back. Did you miss us when you were not allowed to come to the program? Will you heed your own words when you're once again a free man? We sure hope so.

Go Home, Beat

I don't like The Beat Within. I wish The Beat Within stops coming to B4 because I will like my two full hours on Tuesday nights.

And we can't really write what we feel. I hope The Beat Within people don't come back next Tuesday.

-RKLJS B4

From The Beat: We have to disagree with you about one thing: You can write what you feel. But that doesn't mean we can print whatever you feel. We are guests here, and we have rules to follow ourselves. So, of course we're sorry you don't like The Beat and feel like we're taking your time, but if you have something you want to get off your chest on paper, The Beat is there for you, even if we don't publish the pieces we can't publish.

The Star Of Hot Souls

The star is made of souls
The diamond is hot souls
In diamond is souls
In the heart is love souls
In the heart is love hot souls

-Eeo B1

From The Beat: We wish we could understand this little flow. Where is your soul?

9'm Tired And 9 Ain't

I'm tired if this messed up place (YGC)
I ain't seen no pretty girl in three months
What I mean is my wifey (Qesha)
I ain't seen her pretty bright smile in a long time
I'm tired of people thinking they big and bad in the halls
Then when I see them on the outs
They be scared to say wherever they from
I ain't seen my block in hella long
You know me I got to be on the block with the homies
That's just the way it is
One love to the homies
One love to family
One love to my wifey. I love you Qesha girl, and that's for real. Don't hate on my wifey.

-Wal-Greens B4

From The Beat: If you "got to be on the block with the homies, That's just the way it is," then you're not tired enough of this place. When will your girl's smile be more important to you than risking it all for the block? Can you explain why a person might die for answering the question, "Where are you from?"

Still on the
same case
trying not to
catch any more
while I'm in
here 'cause
it's not cool
anymore.

My life Is So Real

I grew up with my mom. She took us from my uncle at the age of eight. Well, by we I mean us, as in me and my big sister.

I grew up around most females, my grandmother, my sister, and my cousins. I was the only boy, me and my uncle. I was always scared of my mom because she hated my dad, and she used to take it out on me. I mean, didn't get me wrong, I love my mom. But she just used to scare me.

My mom came and got us, and we moved with my mom. We was coo' for a good while, but we didn't have no money. All the lil' kinds on the block had the good shoes and the new fits. My dad was doing all he can do and I love him for that, but I needed more, so I started stealing cars and selling them, an' got caught up.

Now, the only by my side is my dad. My mom gave up on me, but I know she still love me. But that's just the way it is. I'm 17 now, and can't go home. That's why I knew my life is so real.

-Jamoe B4

From The Beat: This is interesting to read, Jamoe. How did your mother take it out on you? Why did she hate your dad so much? How can you take advantage of your dad's support right now, and get yourself on a path that leads away from here and never comes back?





What I Did Today

Today I woke up, folded my covers, then I talked to this dude who got me set up to go to class.

Then I went to the medical room to talk to the lady about my health. Then we went to another room where she checked me for bumps, and shhh. Then I got my shots and she gave me some candy.

Then I went to the dentist, and my mom was waiting for me at B1. So we walked down to B1.

-Lawrence B1

From The Beat: It sounds like you had a very full day. What did you learn about your health? Did you have a good visit with your mom? What kind of class are you set up to go to?

Makes Me Worse

Being in jail and locked up makes me more worse 'cause it's boring. You in your room all day. Got to go to church. God will save me.

-Rondel B1

From The Beat: There's nothing wrong with turning to God, as long as you know that more is required than that. What sacrifices are you willing to make to stay out of here? God helps those who help themselves.

Gotta Get Me A Job

Man it's another day in jail. Just another week till I get out of here. But when I get out, I'm going to get my life together.

I gotta get a job and stay out this place. Skip that. I just need to stay out of people's face.

-James B1

From The Beat: Staying out of people's face is a very good idea, especially when getting in their face leads here. What kind of job do you want to do?

Me And The Monkeys

I flew to the moon on a yellow submarine, filled with monkeys, fueled by Snickers, stained glass windows, and colorful furnishings.

We ran out of food and killed monkeys to feed the crew, ate pieces of fuel, and away we flew.

To be continued . . .

-Monkey Prince B2

From The Beat: Cool and crazy writing. Where do you come up with this stuff? What happens next?

Lots Of Things Make Me Mad

There's a lot of things that make me mad. Things like when I step foot in YGC and I got to come in here and people telling me when to talk, sleep, shower, and use the bathroom, that makes me mad a lot.

The other thing that gets me mad is when I hear one of my thugs got killed and I am in here and I can't do nothing about it, that makes me mad, and when my female do stupid shhh makes me mad.

-Bear B2

From The Beat: Well, you know what you need to do to avoid being in a position where people can be all in your business. What will it take for you to do those things? And whatever you could do about the folks you know who have been killed won't bring them back, but it sure can put you in a place you'll like less than the Halls.

Stay On Top Of Game

What's really good with y'all? It's me and young Debbie just posted in this program. Peep our conversation.

J: Wassup young Cee, why you come back to this weak-ass place?

D: 'Cause I ran away from my group home and my daddy called the police.

J: That's played, but you know off top he just looking out for you.

D: Yeah, that's true. But now, when you leaving to Colorado?

J: I'm about to be up out of this place in the middle of May. I'm about to do my program and just get this time I gotta do over with. And yo' ass betta do the same wherever they place you at (either home or a group home). Do what you gotta do and stay out' the system. Set a goal and think of your future, alright? No more coming in and out fa real!

D: Don't even trip my ninja, I'm 'a do what I gotta do to get my mind educated and be legit once I get out. I learned my lesson already!

J: Yup, we finna be out there stunnin' so beautiful!! Holla!!

-Jazze and Debbie GU

From The Beat: Nice interview; good attitudes. We hope you'll remember these words once you're on the outs and you're faced with the same temptations that are always out there.

Get Over It

I get mad when someone just won't stop talking. Sometimes you just have to let some things go.

Some people can't just let go of grudges. One day somebody owed me a little bit of money, and we had a whole bunch of conflicts. I felt much netter when I let it go.

-Sir Pimpalicious YTEC

From The Beat: Well, Sir, we think you're right on the money with this advice. If we keep stewing about the past, we never get to move into the future.

Break Up Or Make Up

I saw you for the first time, been a long time

He brought out all these feelings that I never knew I had inside

Seeing you with another girl, it didn't sit with me cool

And I'm mad at myself cause "I love you"

And with or without you I'm goin' through hell

I don't think that I could shake ya

So baby, can we break up?

I know this is kind of crazy but baby, I wanna make up.

I never knew but to love you

I thought that I was through wit' you, so glad that I could be single

Now I'm gon' thinkin' 'bout the past and wish that I could just go back

And I'm mad at myself 'cause I love you

And I really want you to come back

I don't know if I'm crazy, but all the pain and the heartache you gave me

Finally made me wanna get back wit' you

You held her hand the way you held mine,

You felt her, uh, the way you felt mine

I don't think that I could shake ya,

So baby, can we break up

I know this is kind of crazy, but I want to make up, baby.

I don't know what you did to me, boy

But I want you, so come back now or I'll go crazy

-Lil' Wifey GU

From The Beat: "I don't know if I'm crazy/but all the pain and the heartache you gave me/finally made me wanna get back wit' you." We can't say this is crazy, but it sure as hell is sad. Don't you love yourself, Lil' Wifey? Think hard about why you want to get back with someone who hurt you and what that says about how you want to be treated. Have you ever read Broken Glass in The Beat? She drops a lot of game about being with men who treat their women badly.

It Doesn't Matter Where I'm From

I never get mad at my family or friends. I do get angry when I see somebody I don't know from the street think that they hard, then walk up to me and ask me where I'm from.

It doesn't matter where I'm from. And if they/he is mugging, then it's on. I'm gonna start kicking ass. Mostly black and Cambodian be asking me that.

-Phu Quy YTEC

From The Beat: Don't you think it's messed up, Phu Quy, that you can't find yourself in beef just for answering the question, "Where are you from?" It seems the same whether it's between different blocks in the same city or different countries in the same world. Why do you think people just can't learn to live together?

Finding My Long-Lost Self

I'm trying to find myself in here

because this is the last time to find myself in here

I want to change my life and get back

on the right track

because I got a baby to go home to

I want get up out of here right now

I'm tired of being a grape

I don't ever want to come

Back up in here.

-Deshay GU

From The Beat: Good luck in your search. What do you expect to find in yourself, and why do you think you have a hard time seeing what's up when you're on the outs?

Being a gang member messed my whole life up, so now I'm back, and I'm waiting to get out.



How To Kill A Living Soul

How do you kill a living soul?

You tell them to their face that they are fools. You neglect them and lead them to believe they are worthless. You build up their trust, you befriend to them until the "end," then unexpectedly you rip their heart apart.

A father, a mother, a friend, or a boyfriend, it doesn't matter — everyone wants, needs, to be loved. A living soul is the most delicate thing in this world. To be selfish enough to destroy, that means, the real soul crusher is not only the devil, but it is also you.

-Ginger

From The Beat: The question we have, that lies behind this piece, is why do you think people would go out of their way to crush souls? Is it that they don't know what they're doing? Is it perhaps one of the reactions of someone who's had his or her soul crushed already? Why would someone purposely hate on someone who needs love?

D-Boy

Hey, a quick shout out to D-Boy. Much love and respect for your "Ladies Night" piece. Good lookin' out to us females, we could always use the extra help. And it's good to know we still have some respectful men out there who ain't got no shame in their game — unless you just tryin' to get some.

-Ashley

From The Beat: D-Boy is quickly turning into one of the most powerful writers in The Beat — thanks for showing him your respect and encouraging him to keep it goin'.

Why?

Why are you acting like this?

Why are they saying that to me?

Why are you leaving me?

Why don't you love me?

Why did you lie to me about breaking up with me?

Why do I feel heart broken?

Because you did it.

-Six

From The Beat: Why do you think she left you? How will you pick up the pieces and continue moving forward?

Caring Heart

I would rather have a caring heart because I'm not that intelligent to be incarcerated in a juvenile hall, but I'm intelligent as in a character trait of me.

-Roderick

From The Beat: What is it about the caring heart that makes it so powerful? What would you do with your caring heart? The measure of your intelligence will be how you learn from this experience of being in the Hall.

My Caring Heart

I would have a caring heart because my family I got waiting at home. If you can't care for them, who can you care for?

But if you care for someone who don't want to be cared for, they can turn on you in seconds. Carin' for someone who don't like to be care for isn't always a good thing.

-Young Bug

From The Beat: Of course, the best thing would be to let your caring heart guide your intelligent mind. But we feel your love for your family. What happened when you cared for someone who didn't want to be cared for?

Broken Glass

I just needed to holla at you real quick, and let you know I got much love for you — and I hope you know this — plus a whole lot of respect. You're an amazing writer and every one of your pieces gives me so much inspiration.

You're out soon girl, don't let them haters get to you. Hopefully soon you can break free from that broken glass once and for all. Don't settle for "less than." Stay up. Much love.

-Ashley

From The Beat: You said it all — all of us here feel the same way.

Shady Weekend

This weekend I called my house and my brother told me that my house got shot up. So when I got off the phone, I told the homeboys what had happened.

The first thing we did was hit up our rivals. As soon as we did that, the staff made everybody take it down and they put us all on lockdown because they want everybody to be safe.

But the thing that I don't get is why do the staff put us on lockdown if were gonna be out with our rivals as soon as were off lockdown? If they really wanted us to be safe then why do they keep us on the same unit? I'm out with that.

-Lil D

From The Beat: You ask a good question, and we don't have a good answer. Maybe they're hoping you'll learn to live together peacefully, or maybe there's some state law or county regulation that prevents them from separating you. But, whatever the answer, it doesn't prevent us from asking you an even more basic question, which is why your enemy looks more like you than the staff? Why are Latinos with so much in common seeing each other as enemies? Why are Black Americans, with so much in common, seeing each other as enemies? Who do you think benefits when you and your rivals go at it, whether in the Hall or on the street? What would it take for y'all to realize that by uniting, you make yourselves truly strong. When you and your "rivals" put down your beef and get

Juvenile Ain't The Place To Be

To all the people who haven't came to juvenile, you shouldn't, because you have to listen to whatever the staff says. When they ask you to brush your teeth you have to; when they ask you to go to your room you have to.

So for ya'll who haven't been here don't come, because you have to follow the rules even when you don't want to.

-Lil' Lloyd

From The Beat: We feel ya, Lil' Lloyd. What about the people who are already in juvenile? Do you have any advice for them?

Can't Tell You The Truth Right Now

What can you say when shhh don't go your way

The system don't give a damn what you say

The bottom line is that you pay

Pay the time the price what ever it may be

What should I say to tell you the truth

I can't say nothing at least right now.

-Bowman

From The Beat: Our question is what can you do to make things go better for you? Yes, you are paying a high price for being here, but can you flip the script so that when you are out again, you will be able to stay out of the system? It may never give a damn about you, but will you give enough of a damn about yourself to stay free?

We Love You

Dedicate this time to the fallen warrior

Vicente Elisando aka Chent Locs

We miss you homie, in our minds you'll never leave

My bad that by the gun you were deceived

We'll look out for your son and your family too

We love you homie. We'll finish everything you had to do

We remember the days that we used to hang out

We'd tell jokes, ride it out, when the hynas pass you

You used to shout. Don't worry about your name

being left in vain

Don't worry homie, we'll finish your game

Rest in peace

Homie

-Chop

From The Beat: We feel the pain in this piece, and in your loss, Chop (and many others in the unit). But, of course, we know where your promise to finish the game leads. Can you imagine a new game, a different game, a game where the stakes are not the lives of children? Vicente's murder is so very tragic, but not more tragic than the killings and deaths that will follow, leaving more broken hearts and battered souls. There must be another way!

To The System

You want to help me?

Stop feeding me drugs

And labeling me as a thug

Give me a chance

You want to help me?

Let me think on my own

And stop taking me from my home

Give me a chance

You want to help me?

Leave me the hell alone!

-Tiffany

From The Beat: Are you allowed to object to the drugs you're being fed? Who has labeled you as a thug? If they let you out, or left you at home in the first place, do you think you'd be in a better situation?

Feelin' Him Or Not?

Look maybe someone could help me out . . .

I got a man, right — he look good, he's got a nice ride, a job, even got his own spot . . . So you're saying, what's there not to like, right? The problem is he ain't like nobody I've been with before. He don't got that sexy bad boy image, he don't get my adrenaline goin' when I'm with him. Plus he be on me too hard — I can't be havin' all that, there's no need to be callin' me five times a day, and this jealousy shhh gets to go, baby. If I'm with you, I'm with you, no need to sweat the small stuff. And I know he loves me but don't be stressin' me when I go to hit the blunt, that's all me, and I'll pay the consequences if I get a dirty test.

He's got some years on me, so does he choose to drop some knowledge on me? Nah, he's too busy teasin' me about how I'm a youngsta, but who's with this youngsta? Anyways, I'm eighteen next month so it's nothin'.

Well, I got love for him, but I'm definitely not in love with him . . . Should I wait it out and see what happens, or should I let this boy go before I break his precious heart? 'Cause you know I'ma do what I do regardless of what any man has to say about it.

-Ashley

From The Beat: You asked for advice, but this is one that you're going to have to decide on your own — only you can know how you're feeling and what you're looking for from your man. However, there are a few things that we want to point out. First, getting on you for getting high could be because he's concerned about you getting locked back up, and while that could be self-interest, he could also be trying to look out for you. Second, it sounds like before you make a decision, you have to sit down and talk to him about some of these things in order to understand where he's coming from. Does he understand how you feel about him, from him being too hard and calling too often, and teasing you instead of helping you navigate through troubles with the benefit of his experience? Sometimes people fall in love right away, but sometimes it takes a while to blossom. This isn't an easy decision you're faced with, but it seems like one that you owe it to him — and yourself — to talk through with him.



It's All Good

(Dedicated to my lady: DREAMER)

I want to get to know you
One dose of my lovin'
I'm really gone drive you crazy
Come by my side, you know my feelings are true
My life has really changed ever since I met you
Then go pull up at the after party
I think we make the perfect couple
But you think I'm trouble
She got me feelin' like she the right woman
Thinkin' I'ma be chasin' them chicken heads
Your toes painted, hair fixed all the time
You know that I want you, plus you look fine
If you read between the lines
You can tell that I want you
I bet I'll have you doin' things
That you said you won't do
Making good decisions, things that last long
I know you'll teach me right from the wrong
Before I go home, I'ma stop and hit the horn
If you come out, you know it's on
Snitches be frustrated with a baler
Wonder why I don't call her
Maybe because she's busy
And needs someone to spoil her
She loves it when I'm in town
Hates it when I'm not around
I get her and wear her down
Just enough to hold us down
I can make a 25-year-old feel like a young lady
I admit I'm fallin', it's not me to blame
Make her feel special, she can call me by my name
She thinks that it's a game
I wonder if I wasn't a gangsta would she remain
Surrounding me, you know she's my only
But I'm y our boyfriend, not your homie
I'll always keep it real, no games, no lies
Not tellin' you when I come to your house so it's a surprise
Thoughts go through my head — what about a baby?
But the question is, will you ever do me shady?
Watching her lick her lips
Be hypnotizing me with her hips
I'd sweet talk her if she like
'Cause all she want is a gangsta to treat her right
Look, I'm legit now, I used to break laws
To me you perfect without any flaws
You ain't got to look like a model for me to adore you
All you have to do is be loyal
My past don't matter, that was before you
There gonna be some haters that jealous 'cause I found you
Can't wait until we're out so we can be together
Be with each other through all kinds of weather
I was waiting for a sign from you
Hoping you'd feel the same way too
Where does it go from here...

-Kurupt

From The Beat: Don't keep us in suspense, Kurupt. Where does it go from here? We're not sure after reading this whether she knows how you feel about her or not. We've never met anyone "without any flaws," but we hope it works out with your flawless beauty.

Back Again

Hey Beat Within, this is Juice back again. Well first of all want to say was up to my homeboys and spread out some love to the homegirls.

Well I been here since January 10, 2004. I been here five months. Well on January 26 I got sentenced to Camp. I was here for as month and went to camp on March 5. Well I did good at the Camp till something came in the way. Some homeboy tried to AWOL and I got hit up for that even though I was not going to do it. A bunch of homeboys got kicked out. To make it sadder it was April 6th — my first month and got kicked out.

Now I'm trying to fight my case and hope to get some time. They say I got four choices — one back to Camp, ROP, CYA, or Hall time, so I don't know. All I'm saying is if you going to Camp, never get involved in an AWOL and do good at Camp.

-Juice

From The Beat: It's a trip that you're facing such serious consequences, and the possibility of going to the Y, for something you say you weren't even involved in. If you had your choice of Hall time, Camp, CYA or ROP, which would you choose? Why?

Day Dream

It's about 3:00 p.m. My girl just got home from school. She calls me up tellin' me to strike through. So I tell my mom what's up, you feel me.

I'm 18 but I still live wit' my moms, and I live in her house, so I got to follow her rules. So I tell her I'll be back late night. She says, "Be careful, Honey. I love you." And I'm out wit' a kiss on my cheek and a hug.

Hit the freeway and I'm out to my lady's house. I get to her house and she hears me pull up, knockin' some Pac or some coo' shhh.

She come out the house and give me a hug and a kiss. That moment, everything I've done for her comes into mind. That's why I care about her so much. So I go into her house and we in her room just chillin' and talkin' about stuff, and she tells me that she really wants to get serious wit' me. I tell her how I'm really feelin'.

That's the first day I told her I loved her, and she said it back. So we handle our business and I take her out to eat. Then I drop her off and tell her I'll call her when I get home.

So I bounce to my homeboy's and see what's crackin' wit' him. I just went by to see what he is up to. He's wit' his hina, so I cut to my house. Stop off at Jack-In-The-Box down the street from my house 'cause I know when I go home and tell my moms I ate, she gonna be like, "Where's my food at?"

So I come home, go to my room, turn on the TV and kick back. I pick up the phone and call my hina up and talk to her. Having her tell me, "What took you so long to get home?"

"Baby, you know I ain't wit' no other girls." She says, "Yeah, you're right." For some reason, I have to go. I tell her I love her one last time.

Knock. Knock. "Last head call. Put your pants out." I think, "Damn! Another daydream."

-Kurupt

From The Beat: This is one of those sweet day dreams that can come true, Kurupt. You can make this one happen just be not risking being taken from her again. And next time, don't forget to bring your momma something to eat!

An Intelligent Mind

I think between an intelligent mind and a caring heart, I would choose an intelligent mind.

I've gone through most of my life hearing about how my teachers and girlfriends have thought that I was dead inside. All four times that I been locked up, I haven't shed a tear. When I was a little kid watching sad Disney movies I never felt anything. When I see the commercials for sponsoring kids in third world countries, I don't feel bad, so I simply change the channel. I have an IQ of 130 so I already have an intelligent mind.

Basically I'm gon' keep being me.

-Matt

From The Beat: It sounds like you based your answer on the attributes you already see yourself as having. Why do you think others see you as dead inside? Do you agree with them, or is there somewhere deep down where you do feel things? What are the things that get to you — that bring a smile out from deep within, or make your heart feel heavy with sadness? Do you wish you could feel more?

Hit Gates When You Hear "Escape"

Well, I'm just trying to stay cool so I get a good report. The reason for that is because I got CYA shot. Shady, huh?

I got one thing to say, when you go to Camp, stay to yourself, and if you here people talking about escape you better get windy because they don't play around up there. If you got info on that shhh you better let someone know or just don't speak on it. Somehow someone just open they mouth and then you off to CYA.

Well much love to my sister.

-David

From The Beat: It's a trip how many got to Camp or a group home, only to end up escalating the time they'll end up facing in the long run. We see so many make the return trip to the Hall and back to placement until the judge gets sick of it and ships 'em to the Y. Why do you think so many choose to run and end up putting themselves in a situation that calls for even more time?

Ready To Explode

A ticking time bomb inside ready to explode
Emotions running through my mind like a river flow
Like a monster or beast ready to attack
It seems everyone's my enemy, and only God has my back
Feelings of hatred towards everyone I see
Usually I don't think like this, it's not the normal me
Release date seem like it's never going to happen
When I think of why I'm here, I just start laughin'
Hahahahahahaha...

-Peanut Head

From The Beat: So what's going on, PH? Why are things not normal? If God has your back, why do you have to hate? We're not sure what to make of your laughter. It seems to us the you'll only get the last laugh by never coming back to a place like this again.

Don't Keep Your Hopes Up

When you have your first court date, most people think there getting out on probation but you're not. Maybe if you didn't get a big charge you might have got out, but me, just hoping for the best so when I come home I can be with my family and have a great time.

I miss being with my family so if you haven't been here don't come. It ain't the place.

-Lil' Lloyd

From The Beat: What else do you wish you would have known before you got caught up? Are there other pieces of advice you have for other folk out there who are facing the same situation as you are?

I Am

I'm the speeding bullet
I'm your conscience telling to do it
I'm the eyes in the dark
I'm the dog that don't bark
I'm the king in bloody chess
But I'm the mind putting you in check
I'm more than you think
I'm death in your face before you blink
I am
I am

-Scarface

From The Beat: Okay, we're scared. You creep soundlessly in the dark, watching. But apparently something else was watching you, because here you are! The one "weapon" you have that can truly conquer is that strong affirmation, "I'm more than you think!" Yes, you are — even more than you think you are. But it's not the eyes in the dark, or the speeding bullet that makes you more. It's that mind you write about.



24 Hours To Live

If I had 24 hours to live, I would probably spend all of my time with my family and friends. I would want to spend the 24 hours eating my favorite foods, remembering good memories and maybe even sad. I would tell my mom and dad that I love them very much and to take care of my brother and sister, and I would remember to tell my cousin to take care of my seven-month-old niece and to tell her about me and I always loved her.

-Brenda

From The Beat: You know the saying, "live every day like it's your last?" Your last 24 hours sound like a great way to spend every day — around the people you love, and enjoying the good things in life. Are you gonna incorporate these things into your life on the daily? Will spending more time with your loved ones help you stay out?

If There Is One Thing I Could Change

If there were one thing I could change about the system, I would change how the PO works. I think that PO's arrest people over too petty of things, like breaking curfew or dirty tests for weed. I don't think PO's should arrest you for those things, because while you're doing them, you're not really hurting anyone but yourself.

One thing that I don't like about being incarcerated is that whatever you do, they keep track of like how many hours you sleep and things like that. Another thing I don't like is that they grade you on everything you do.

-David

From The Beat: We see your point about curfew and weed only hurting you, but we suppose part of the issue is that system folks are trying to see whether or not you can follow rules. Plus, lots of folks we know get into trouble when they're high or because they're trying to support their habit. What do you see as legitimate reasons for PO's locking kids up? How do you think the system could really help you?

The System

The system is hella screwed up, and it's meant to hurt us keep locking us up, and at eighteen desert us thanks to the system I'll be an adult flippin' burgers so worried about my case when I haven't commit no murders all the system wants is to catch us slippin' they might have caught me a few times but still I ain't trippin' 'cause at the sight of a cop I'm straight dippin' but forget that type of action, I've been doing it too long I need to straighten up my act and prove this system wrong because we ain't all losers that's why I hate this system aka juvenile abusers so let this be a lesson to all the readers of The Beat the system can't handle me, I'm still standing on my feet.

-Eric

From The Beat: We like to see you standing on your feet, but are your feet on solid ground, or on quick sand that keeps you sinking? The system can't make you change, so how much are you trying to help yourself?

Robert Reyes

I have a staff that I respect very much. He's the supervisor of the Hall. Robert Reyes, I want to thank you. You've taken time out of your important days of work to come and talk to me when I've felt down and deepest. You've helped me out in a way I'll never be able to say.

Robert Reyes is like a father I never had. Robert Reyes respects us like we're humans and not incarcerated beings.

Some Halls don't have people who you can really trust and talk to, but Robert Reyes is not only the supervisor, I look at him as a person, a human being, and a friend.

So thanks Robert Reyes for making us feel like real people, and thanks for being there when I needed someone to talk to.

-Kimberly

From The Beat: How fortunate that you have a staff member at the Hall you respect so much. We appreciate you giving credit to staff that stand out because they hear a lot of complaints, but not many thanks. Do you think if there were more mutual respect between you and staff, that the system would be more effective? Do you think staff and detainees could work harder to treat each other better? By the way, thanks Robert Reyes.

Soak In Love

If I had 24 hours, I would cry and laugh. Spend time with my family and loved ones. I would breathe the fresh air in and out. I would stay awake the whole time, soaking in love. I would hug everyone in sight. And say sorry for all my sins. I would die in peace.

-Desiree

From The Beat: Why not do these things today? Why do most people wait until their last 24 hours to enjoy the fresh air and say sorry?

An Itch That Won't Go Away

To me the itch is the stupid system that never leaves me alone. They bust me for every little thing that I do. It's like I'm their little puppy and everything they say to me I'm supposed to do: "complete this program," "don't go there," "don't do that."

The only good thing the system has ever done for me is finally try to send me home after I spent fourteen months in the group home system. All I know is once I go home I will do good and stay out of the JSC/probation system

-Frank

From The Beat: What is it about your home that will keep you crime-free? We hear that a lot, that people will so well if they get to go home. We don't doubt that they want to stay home, by why do they slip up and come back? How can you stay focused and remain on the outs?

Moments

These priceless little hands will grow to be big and strong and helpful. See, these teeny tiny little toes will carry this body that grows and grows. This precious sweet and radiant smile will help me go the extra mile, and deep inside a soul, and destined to be special from the start.

-Desiree

From The Beat: How will you use these gifts? Where will those tiny toes and that radiant smile take you?

Wishing For Wings

Wishing for wings to be able to rise,
praying for answers
Tears staining my cheeks,
a warmth my soul seeks.

Looking to the sky for help from above,
expecting a radiance of light and a dove.
But nothing of a response,
just a silence of taunts.

Someone give me a hope for another day,
give me a new life to deal another way.

-Elizabeth

From The Beat: We hope you'll can find somebody you trust to talk with about your depressed thoughts. What are the things that warm your soul? True friends? Laughing with your family? Watching your favorite movie? What helps you feel better?

Alone And Vulnerable

Being alone and vulnerable is my worst fear. I recently had a boyfriend who I broke up with for no reason just because I didn't feel that I was good enough for him. I never thought about how I would be without him. Now I'm lonely and scared and that is my biggest fear.

-Desiree

From The Beat: How'd you overcome other fears, like crossing the street alone when you were six or sleeping alone in the dark? Silly examples, but you overcame those fears. So how are you gonna overcome this one? By the way, why did you think you weren't "good enough" for your ex? What would a "good enough" person have been?

Fight For The Right To Party

I think the system is messed up. I think a lot of people are here because of drinking and smoking. Now they want to put drugs in their bodies. Let them, it's their body. They ain't thieves, rapists or killers. They just like to party. I don't see anything wrong with anybody partying. I could see maybe drinking and driving, but that's a whole different story.

Also coming here because you didn't contact your PO for whatever reasons, like you just didn't want to talk to them.

-Miguel

From The Beat: Yes, partying doesn't really seem like a crime, but why do you think people put laws in place to keep people under 21 from drinking? Do you know many folks who committed their crimes while they were high?

To The Staff

I'm happy that I'm gettin' out tomorrow. But, then if I think about it, I'm gonna miss all the staff who have taught me good stuff. I'm gonna miss Alyse talking to me like she's my mom. Man, I'm gonna miss those long talks, Brooke being funny with me. Meg's dopeness, Alicia always tellin' me, "Ashlee, you're not doing good." Peter tellin' me, "No, Ashlee, you can't go to the bathroom." Love.

-Ashlee

From The Beat: Aw, that's sweet that some of the staff will stay with you, in your heart, when you leave. With all the ugly stories about staff, we forget that there are a lot of good staff in Juvenile Hall. Thanks for giving them credit. What are some of the things that the staff taught you?

Jesse

Jesse, hey, what's up? We all miss you around here. It's Desiree. You probably don't remember me, but I've been reading you writings and they're amazing. I have even jerked a tear. SLO isn't the same without you. But I just want to let you know your greatly missed and your writings are amazing. Love always.

-Desiree

From The Beat: That's cool that you really felt Jesse's words. Which pieces were your favorites? Why? What about his work made you cry?

Fear

The fear that I have is that I will lose someone I love or care for a lot. I feel that if I was ever told that my mother or father weren't here anymore I would go crazy! Flip out! Wish for death myself!

The day that my grandma died, I woke up because I heard the phone ring, then I heard crying so I got up. I already had a bad feeling until my aunt said, "your grandma is dead." I was in shock. I couldn't believe it. I thought I was still asleep. I didn't know how to respond, and now three years later, I still can't believe it, so I'm still in shock and can't handle deaths or big shocks.

-Brenda

From The Beat: We're glad you appreciate your folks, but everyone is going to die eventually, as you know. What worries you the most about those you love dying? Is it that you can't imagine your life without them? Grieving is natural, but you do you think your grandmother would want you to grieve forever, or would she want you to be happy again? Writing about your fears is good, maybe doing that more will help you become calmer.



Passed Me By

When I was locked up, I missed a lot of things. I missed one of my older brother's birthdays. I was pissed off because I love my family.

I also missed my mother's birthday. That is what hit me real hard. I could have been with my mom, spending time with her on her birthday, but no, I was in the hall messing around.

While locked up, I also missed my other brother's first wedding. He got married on my mom's birthday. So I missed two really special things on one day. I also missed a couple of holidays.

Man this life ain't cool. I ain't tryin' to mess up no more! My family comes first, so next time I'm out there about to do something stupid, I'm gonna think about my family before I do it.

Some of the stuff I missed, I can't get back. I can't go back in time and chill wit' my brother on his wedding that already passed. But I learned my lesson.... I ain't got no one to blame but myself.

-Samer

From The Beat: It says a lot about how mature this experience has made you that you realize how unworthy that criminal lifestyle can be. You have a great opportunity ahead of you and you know that if you make the right decisions you can enjoy that freedom without ever missing out again.

SFPD Declares War On Hunters Point

I think it's messed up that the SFPD declared war on Hunter's Point, giving them the right to shoot first. An innocent bystander could be reaching for a pack of cigarettes or wallet and get shot.

Also, when a cop gets killed after eight years, they think that gives them a right to declare war! What about all the people on the street that have been killed by cops in the past eight years?

Another thing, why, when a cop dies, we hear all the good about them but not if they're crooked or the other bad things? But when someone in the 'hood gets killed or locked up, we only hear the bad and not the good. That's all I got to say on that.

-Bryant

From The Beat: We have some ideas about why the police get positive funeral reviews while folks in the barrios and hoods get dismissed. For instance, the police have more money and therefore more influence upon the media than we do. You speak on this with some real emotion Bryant. Don't lose that passion for justice, let it grow and give your life more purpose.

**when they commit
a murder
They walk down the
street casually**

When I Think in My Cell

I picture myself on the outside world, living and enjoying things just like other people do. I think so much about the good things that after awhile, I just wish so hard that I would have made the right choices in life.

The one thing that goes through my mind is my parents. I put them through a lot. And I'm going to make sure I make up for the damage that I caused.

I'm young and I made mistakes, but the only thing that would make up for everything I did is to patch up the holes. I'm never going to let my parents down, but most of all, I will never let myself down.

-Albert

From The Beat: There are few things that we respect more than someone with the determination to make things better with their life. A lot of folks have a tremendous amount of confidence in you Albert. Fortunately this lil' stint in Walden House is not for long and you have so much future ahead of you. Always remember this feeling and let it be the fuel that lights the fire in your heart and mind to remain determined and free.

Freedom, Equality And Justice For All

When I look out my window, I wish for freedom, justice, and equality for all. I wish there was justice on the police just like there is "justice" on us. I wish there is equality for everyone, Black, White, Brown, or Yellow, boy or girl.

-Anonymous

From The Beat: What would "justice for the police" be? Do you want the same justice for the police that you wish you had or give back the kind of justice that the police gave you? What is justice for you? We are wishing for the same thing as you and working hard for it.

From The Streets To The Go

From the street to the Gs
All the way to the police station
Everyone hatin'
And this is known across the nation
Us Gs got hella enemies
But the main one is the police
They hatin' us on the street
And when they commit a murder
They walk down the street casually
And when us minorities do the same thing
It seems we doin' life and some
Just 'cause we the ones
Sellin' drugs and packin' guns
Even though police doin' the same thing
Wit' a badge on
And when they do commit a murder
Life just goes on

-Merced

From The Beat: Like always you keep coming through with some solid flows. We dig this one 'cause it speaks some truth about the Po-Po's. And for all those that don't know: you should study young Merced's style!

Police

Police are given too much power. It's overwhelming them. They need people watching them because they have been doing wrong.

I feel like they have been done wrong in their life, and now they have a chance to do people in the wrong. And they don't have a life, so they want to take other people's lives.

They're the biggest gangs in the world, and nothing happen to them when they're doing wrong. And they like young kids behind bars. Think about that.

-Ready Rich

From The Beat: We hope that a lot of people think of that. Many young folk pose the same argument about why police behave the way they do. Maybe. Maybe not. We know police who fit both descriptions. So what other reasons can you think of for police acting the way they do? Who should watch the police in our communities to ensure that they don't break the laws they are supposed to be upholding? What powers do you think the police shouldn't have?

**my friend got up when the cop told him to, and
the cop maced him for no reason,
and then laughed about it.**

Dirty Cops

I think the cops are mostly dirty cops. Not all of them are dirty cops, but most of them. I think it's messed up that if you pull out your wallet the police can shoot you and say you were reaching for something else. Cops need to take responsibility for their actions.

See, cops do crooked things because they know they can get away with it. One time, me and my friend were arrested for being out past curfew. When he was searching us, he looked in my friend's wallet and found a razor blade.

The cop said, "If this shhh cuts me, I'll stick it down your 'effin' spine." Then my friend got up when the cop told him to, and the cop maced him for no reason, and then laughed about it. That's just one example of what some cops get away with.

-Jim

From The Beat: Know your rights, Jim. If the police give you any problems in the future, file a complaint on them. That is the first step we need to take in holding them accountable.

Letter To A Child

I think that a lot of times the media has a distorted view of reality because they aren't living the hardcore lifestyle. When a cop dies, it's on the front page, even if he's crooked. When a gangster dies, it's like it never happened.

They might talk about how good a cop he was and how he was a father and this and that, but did they say that the gangster was a good guy too? How do they know that the cop wasn't an abusive alcoholic and a crooked cop?

Why shouldn't he get credit for making other lives miserable and receiving his karma or just rewards for all his wrong doings?

-Warhead

From The Beat: That's a good question to end on Warhead. We can't answer that of course, but we have another question we would like to get your input on: in your opinion is such a violent death the way karma comes back around? Also, if the media paints this distorted view of what you know, what do you think about the rest of the stories you see on the news? How can people educate themselves about the truth? By the way, this is a great piece of thinking and writing.

Police Need To Own Up For Their Actions

I'ma put it like this. Now that the cops got the green light to fire first in Hunter's Point on anybody they feel threatened by, then they be able to justify what they did, and get away with it.

I feel like they should get charged because when somebody in the community lets off on someone, then they are going down for real. Cops get away with it. I would just like to see them own up for their actions, just like us.

-Mark

From The Beat: It is up to the people to hold the police accountable. We are not powerless against them. When you are eligible to vote, be sure to remember what you said here and do something to change the way they are treated after committing crimes themselves. Also, continue to write about what you see to the people who never see what you see. Educate them!

My Window Out

I look out my window mostly every day and night before I go to sleep. When I go through problems, I look out the window, and I sit and think about everything I used to do on the outs.

I wish that I could get another chance at life. Every time I look out the window, I wish I could spend more time with my family.

-Hyphee

From The Beat: You will have another chance at life Hyphee (young Uso) so don't feel like your future is lost. You will get out soon and that is when you will have the opportunity to do and accomplish all the things that you wanted to in life.



The Justice System

The justice system is messed up and the damn cops are wienies.

California prisons and authority is bs, and everybody knows what I mean. The cops are crooked and steroid pumpin'.

Arnold the governor ain't doing shhh. All the cops need to go under investigation and listen and understand where we comin' from.

-Paul

From The Beat: Don't ever forget this Paul. Maybe it is time that we stop fighting against each other and discover who the real threat is. Strength comes through unity.

Dream Car

When I look out my window I wish I had a candy blue H2 on dubs with slap and a weed tree right in the back yard and a club right down the street and I wish there was not so much killing going on.

-Weezy

From The Beat: We can envision you now rolling in that candy blue H2 giving everyone that looks a cavity. But ain't there something more important than that out there for you? Will what you have make you more happier than

It's Not Fair

It's not fair how police can beat us down and get away with it. But if we touch the police we take penitentiary chances.

-Big T

From The Beat: It really ain't fair. We need to stop making it easier for the police to get away with the things that they do. That means we got to stop committing crimes that make it easier for the public to believe the police than they do the people.

To Grams and Gramps

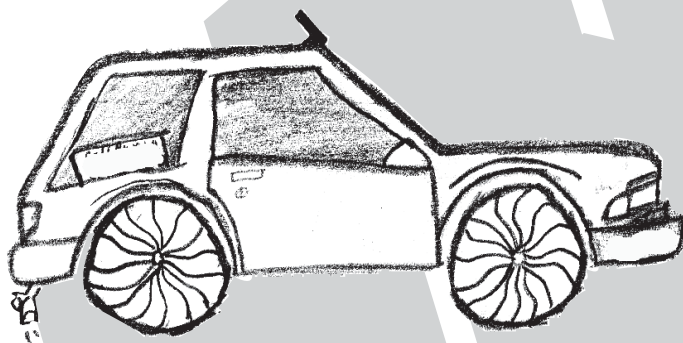
I love you guys a lot and I'm sorry for hurting you guys by using and drinking. I apologize for not telling you guys the truth when you guys asked if I smoked weed or cigarettes and I told you guys "no." I only tried cigarettes once.

I feel I let you and the family down because I lied. I'm sorry for hiding from you guys when you came to pick me up for soccer practice. I was too much into my addiction. I was more worried about getting high than getting chances for a scholarship in soccer.

I'll tell you the truth right now. I used to smoke weed, cigarettes, and drank hard liquor and beer for about 9 to 10 months. Love you guys a lot. Hope you can forgive.

-Boon

From The Beat: We think that your honesty is beautiful and a definite reflection of how mature you are becoming. Emphasis on BECOMING Boon. Keep on keep'n on! We are sure that your grandparents will be encouraged by your honesty and we hope that they do forgive you. Could we send them this piece, or will you make sure one gets in their hands?



On My Own

When I look out my window, I wish that I could have been on my own with my girl living my life with her.

The other thing is that I wish that I should have never used drugs at all, because drugs were the main thing that messed up my life.

Sometimes I wish that I never used. I could have been getting out of high school this year.

Also, I messed up so bad with my girl that she could have left me so many times. But she stayed with me anyways because she loved me for who I was and not what I was doing.

So that's why I wished I never used.

-Charlie

From The Beat: They say that hindsight is always 20/20. Good news though Charlie, you will get out and have all the opportunity in the world to make your life how you envision it now. Stay focused on that dream, homie, and you will find a means. You cannot change the past, but you can use the lessons you learned from living it to get the future you want.

Lost Love

I lost a love

One that I cared about

One that really meant something

She was the one that I wanted to marry

Now that she is gone, I don't know what to do

But now that she is gone, I now know that

She was not the one

-Johnnie

From The Beat: You have a whole life ahead of you Johnnie, and we know from experience that the one you want to marry now will not be the same one you want to be married to after too long. Being locked up is not the time to be married.

9 Miss

I miss my honey and seeing his handsome face.

I miss all the pleasure he gave me, just by being with me.

I miss his voice and all the nice things he'd say to me.

I miss that smell he always had.

I miss his laugh and how he made me smile when I was with him.

-Jessica

From The Beat: Sounds like you have good reason to get out of the system and to stay out. You've made a list of what you miss. Now make a list of what you'll need to do to stay out of the hall.

Three Strikes Law

Ten years ago California passed a law that has affected my decisions as of today. I have been convicted of a felony, or two. Since I'm a minor, it doesn't affect me. If I were two weeks older, I'd be 18. If I were 18 when accused of what I'm accused of, I'd only need one more felony to be put away for life.

If I get another felony after I'm 18, my records are unsealed and I'm charged with 25 years to life. This has affected me and my family.

-S

From The Beat: It sure has affected you. Whether it's a good or a bad law, you have no choice now but to shape up. And we think that's just what you will do.

Seasons

Seasons go by, one by one.

Time says they'll never be done.

Slowly but surely it's turning spring.

I wonder what the new season will bring.

Locked in a cage with the same old view,

I watch the grass grow in the morning dew.

Time after time I see the sun fly by.

I sit and ponder, asking myself why.

Day in, day out, I try not to shout.

I try to test my patience without a doubt.

I fly through my mind free.

No walls, no cages, just me.

-Jesse

From The Beat: Nice poem Jesse. You're grappling with the big questions. The time will come when you'll say — enough with the questions. And then you'll start to act. Reflection and action, action and reflection. We all go back and forth, but each time we learn a bit more. To move closer to wisdom is what many thoughtful people aim for. You're a thoughtful person. What are you aiming for?

If I could go back, I'd do many things differently.

This Place

This place smells of sadness and depression.

I lie in my bed and listen to the rain drip on the window.

All I want is to hear the laughter of my friends, and to kiss

my darling, who I love so much, and to hear his voice

saying goodnight to me. Sometimes I wish I were a leaf

so I could fly away in the wind.

If I could go back, I'd do many things differently.

-Ashley

From The Beat: Fine poem Ashley. We hope you get your wish, soon. What are you willing to give or give up to achieve your dreams?



For My Son

The best of hope will come soon. My child and I will be together. I wish I had all the dollars in the world, for my son, my family and I. I need to be a hero to him. In here, I feel like nothing. I'd like to fly to him and to my family and be with them forever. I need to get on my heels and get through this, for my son.

-Elise

From The Beat: You have a strong motive. Do you have a strong will? Dig in. Get through this. Your family needs you. Your son needs you.

Why I Write

I write because it makes me feel comfortable. Sometimes, it makes time go by faster. I like to practice writing so my style will be better.

-Foster

From The Beat: Like shooting free throws or learning to dance, all things worth doing require practice. So keep writing. Let us know how you're doing.

Glass Dream

Her glass dream was shattered by a rock
and as time and years go by
her secret plan
becomes a mere memory
and the pain splinters her heart.
And a tear drops from her eye.

-Samantha

From The Beat: Nice writing. Time for her to have a new dream. Especially since she can't put the old one back together.

I'm Tired

I'm back in here because I got kicked out of my group home and now I need to go to another — just for a stupid mistake that I did. I'm tired of coming back to this place. I'm going to try to see if I can leave to Mexico with my Mom and sister.

I'm tired of being away from my family and living with other people. I'm tired.

-Tired

From The Beat: Are you tired enough to give up the behavior that landed you in the system? Until you're that tired, you're not tired enough.

Questions

I question myself.

Will I change when I get out?

I see myself in the mirror.

My appearance has changed.

Will I go back to my old habits.

Will I change?

-Jessica

From The Beat: We hope so. Are you ready? Is it what you really want? We hope so.

My Dream

I dream of a field
with a garden
where I can sit in a chair all mine
and fuse my broken heart.
In time, I know I will find this garden.

-Ashley

From The Beat: Hey, you'll find a few good poems there, too. Fine writing.

What Is It?

What is it you people want?
Is it some money, some joke, or some kind of lie?
Go home to your families.
If you didn't care, I'd be locked up in here
with no one but me and these weak magazines
about dopefiends
and how they recovered.
Or mothers and sex unprotected —
lives that were hectic.
But hold on a second.
If that's how you felt —
shoot, eight months ago
I'd have been killed myself.
Thanks, people who care.

-Brian

From The Beat: We're just a bit confused about who you're talking to and what you're really saying. But whatever you're saying, you say it in style.

Same Sex Marriage

I think same sex marriage is not human. I'm not trying to be mean about it, but that's my opinion. I wouldn't be OK with the people who marry their same sex, but if they want to, it's their life.

-Karina

From The Beat: Gay people don't ask that you approve of their choices. They ask that you respect their right to make their own choices. And you indicate that you do respect that right. We think it's brave of you, and the right thing to do.

A Big Hello

First and foremost, I'd like to give a shout out to all the homeboys in CYA and the pinta. And also to the homies from my town. I'm gonna lace you youngsters up on my current situation.

I'm serving a court commit for something that happened while I was here. I narrowly escaped CYA, thanks to my mouthpiece, 'cause I only recently got out of ROP.

Anyway, that's all the writing for this time. Until next time — alrato.

-Anonymous

From The Beat: OK, so we'll say hello now. Next time, lay some real writing on us. Tell us what's really on your mind and in your heart. Is this the way you thought your life would go? What are your regrets? What would you do differently? What makes you really happy? Stuff like that. Real stuff.... that's what we want to hear from you.

Gay People

I think gay people are not appropriate for children. It's not a good example for my little brothers, because then they would think it's OK to kiss each other. Some gay people try to be girls.

It's not a good example for my little brothers because do you want to be something you're not — like white people trying to be black?

-Mark

From The Beat: Mark, in the last part of your piece you may have hit upon an important point — that is — do you want to be something you're not? If a person is gay, in the same way that a person is black, or white, or brown, or left handed — does it make sense that that person should pretend to be straight? Why can't we let people be who they naturally are, without getting upset about it? You mention your little brothers. You were their age once. You seem to have survived the fact that about ten percent of the population is gay. It didn't change who you are. We think it's good that you're concerned about your brothers. But it might be more useful to them if you helped create an environment that kept them out of the system instead of worrying about them coming into contact with gay people. Being gay isn't against the law. We just want you to consider what the real challenges are, concerning your brothers' well being.

His Speech

His speech was written in dust on his coffin.
A wave closes the bridge into darkness.
But the brick that rests under his pillow
mirrors the story of his death.

-Samantha

From The Beat: This is mysterious. Is your middle name Poe, by any chance?

Freedom

Waiting for that four inch key
that will set me free.
Not raising my hand to do anything.
Being free's the way it should be,
with girls and kicking it with homies.
Being in peace...
I'll still keep trying,
ain't trying to be lying.
Hoping everything will be alright.
I just want to live a fun life, 'cause
at the end it will just be me and my family.

-Tony

From The Beat: Good luck Tony. You know that the real key is inside your heart and your mind, don't you?

Dreams

Life is a dream that we pass by.
Night by night I live another lie.
Day by day my life floats away.
Day by day my spirit starts to decay.
I wish to be free.
But that will never be.
Society has a hold on my soul
but my hands will never fold.
They will have to let me go.
While I seek peace and love,
others seek hate and destruction.
With this, society will never function.
Now my dream is said and done.
I will rise like a phoenix.
I will fly to the sun.

-Jesse

From The Beat: Hey, it's hot up there. Our advice is to stick closer to home. Good writing, by the way.

I Just Don't Know

Being in Juvenile Hall has made my life hell. Being placed in group home after group home, and then the Hall, is very hard. I'm missing out on my life, seeing my Mom and just being a kid. All I want is one chance to be free and out of the system.

Well, that's one big dream that I might not see if I keep doing what I'm doing. Peace.

-Sandra

From The Beat: Then stop doing what you've been doing. Start thinking very carefully about what it would take to change. It starts with your desire, and next you make a plan. Making a plan requires a lot of thought. But this is your life. You have to turn it around. Once you've made a solid commitment to do that, you'll find all the help you need.

Women's Struggles

Women's struggles have been around for a while. It used to be they could not get an education. They can now, though. I think now days, between men and women, it's fairly equal.

-Jim

From The Beat: Hey Jim, have you checked out the difference in paychecks between men and women who perform the same tasks?

Writing

I write because it lets me express my feelings, not only for myself, but for other people to know a little something about me. I write because it's easier to write things down than to talk to people about my problems. I can write whatever I want and however long I want.

Who knows — maybe I will touch someone in a similar case and make them realize they don't want a life with locked doors and bars on the windows.

-Ashley

From The Beat: Yes, who knows. It's for sure your words will reach many hundreds of people. And you do write well.



El Preció De Mi Encarcelación

El que está pagando el precio de mi encarcelación soy yo, porque estar encerrado entre cuatros paredes, sin poder recuperar mi libertad, sin poder ayudar a mi familia, escribirles, comunicarme con ellos es un infierno. Me hacen mucha falta, no saben cuanto los extraño, no puedo hacer nada, sólo esperar a salir pronto libre. Necesito estar libre en este país, para poder ayudarlos allá.

From The Beat: Es verdad, estas pagando el error que haz cometido. Nos imaginamos que te debes de sentirte mal por todo esto que estas pagando. Amigo, no se desanime, continúe y verá que algún día conseguirá lo que quiere.

The Price Of My Incarceration

The person who is paying the price of my incarceration is me, because being locked up inside of four walls, without being able to recover my freedom, without being able to help my family, write to them and communicate with them is a nightmare. I miss them a lot.

You have no idea of how much I miss them, but I can't do anything but wait to get out soon. I need to be free in this country so I can help my family back in my native country.

-Herman B5, SF/YGC

**Take care of yourselves
and think very hard
about things before
it's too late.**

Mi Vida Descontrolada

Cuando tenía 15 años empecé a conocer a mas personas que andaban en pandillas. Empecé a juntarme con ellos y hasta que empecé a rifar con ellos.

A la edad de los 16 años me brincaron a lo que se llama un barrio y desde ahí empecé a usar drogas como la Marihuana y tomar alcohol.

A los meses después, empecé a no ir a la escuela porque me sacaron. Una semana después que me corrieran, empecé a robar stereos de carros y a vender droga.

Después me cacharon en un carro robado y me encerraron por sólo dos semanas, pero no me importo y cuando salí empecé otra vez con las drogas otra vez. Después torcí otra vez y me encerraron por otras dos semanas y ahora estoy aquí.

From The Beat: Que mala jugada, como has estado jugando con tu libertad y tu salud. ¿Sabias que si te adabtas a estas cosas, cuando seas mayor probablemente llegues a terminar solo en carceles. Ni tú ni nadie quiere esto para tu vida, o sí? ¿No toda la vida te la vas a llevar haciendo este tipo de cosas o sí? ¿Hay alguna meta o algo que de verdad quieras que te haga cambiar de pensar y sentido? Usa tu cabeza y piensa lo que vas a hacer con el resto de vida que tienes, eres joven y tienes toda una vida por delante. Tienes que tener en mente que esta vida no te ha llevado a nada bueno. Sólo lee esta misma escritura y mira las cosas negativas en que te has metido y el barrio te ha llevado.

My Uncontrolled Life

When I was 15 years old, I started to get to know more people that were in gangs. I started to hook up with them and even started banging with them.

At the age of 16, they jumped me into something that's called a 'hood, and from then on, I started to use drugs like marijuana, and drink alcohol.

A few months after I got jumped in, I stopped going to school because I got kicked out of it. A week after I got the boot, I started to steal stereos from cars and I started selling drugs.

Eventually I got wrapped up in a stolen car and I was locked up for only two weeks, but I didn't care when I got out and I started to do drugs again. Then, I got locked up again and they locked me up for two weeks and now I'm here.

-Happy, Marin

Mi Hijo Y Mi Familia

Hola, yo soy Juan y les quiero decir que en el tiempo que he estado aquí, he perdido la oportunidad de estar con mi hijo, quien cumplirá un año de edad el 10 de mayo. Cuando llamo por cobrar lo escucho gritar y me dice que ya gatea. Yo quisiera estar ahí compartiendo esos momentos con mi esposa. Pero al salir de aquí, antes que haga algo voy a pensar las cosas mejor. Esto lo voy a hacer por mí sino por mi familia y mi hijo.

Les quiero dar un consejo, cuidensen y piensen bien las cosas antes que sea demasiado tarde.

From The Beat: Debe de ser muy lindo escuchar a un hijo gritar y saber que está con vida, pero al mismo tiempo debe de ser muy triste saber que no puedes estar junto a el, que hay cosas que los separan. Amigo, esperamos que te llegue esa oportunidad de estar con tu hijo y tu familia. No pierdas las esperanzas y busca la forma en como estar con ellos y no volverte a separar.

My Son And My Family

Hello, I am Juan and I want to tell y'all that during my stay in here I've lost the opportunity to be with my son, who'll be one year of age on May 10th. When I call collect, I hear him yelling in the background and I'm told that he's already crawling. I would love to be there taking part in those moments with my wife. Upon leaving here, before I do anything, I'm going to think about things better. I'm not going to do this for myself but for my family and my son.

I want to give y'all a word of advice: Take care of yourselves and think very hard about things before it's too late.

-Juan, 150 Crew

Lo Que Me Enoja

Lo que me hace enojar es querer salir de aquí. Sólo me queda el momento en que me digan que estoy libre, y que le heche gana a la vida, y que siga adelante con mis metas.

From The Beat: Esperamos que ese momento llegue para que puedas seguir adelante. ¿Pero queremos escuchar como le vas a hacer para seguir adelante con tus metas?

Wanting To Get Out Of Here

What makes me mad is wanting to get out of here. The only thing that I have left is the moment when they tell me that I am free so I can put all my effort into succeeding in life, and continuing to move forward with accomplishing my goals.

-Herman B5, SF/YGC

Pensando En Los Homies

Yo les estoy escribiendo al Beat Within para decirles que yo nada mas me la paso pensando en los homies. Pienso en que estaran haciendo, si estaran bien y por los homies que estan preso, me la paso resando por ellos todos los días.

Yo amo a mi barrio, amo a mi color, y si tubiera que morir por el, lo hiciera. También amo a mis homies y daría mi vida por cualquier de ellos. Yo nunca he dejado a ningún homie abajo, y si estan golpeando a cualquier homie, yo me regreso y lo defiendi aunque me den en la madre.

From The Beat: Deberias de pensar en otras personas que en los homies, que por los cuales estas preso por estar con ellos. Porque nosotros consideramos que te agarraron haciendo algo malo con ellos. ¿Por qué mejor no piensas en los que realmente te dan tu protección y amor?

Thinking About The Homies

I'm writing to The Beat Within to tell them that I just pass my time thinking about the homies. I think about what they may be doing on the outs, if they're all right, and also for the homies that are locked up. I also pass my time praying for them every day.

I love my 'hood, I love my color, and if I had to die for it, I would do it. I love my homies and I would give my life for any one of them. I have never left a homie behind, and if anyone of my homies is getting mopped, I go and help him out even if I know if I'm also going to be getting mopped for jumping in.

-Popeye B4, SF/YGC



EUGENE WEEMS

Eugene Weems, who's been dropping heavy pieces on *The Beat Without* for many moons, has been transferred to Rancho Cucamonga so he can go to court for reconsideration of his case. Since he's been writing for *The Beat Within*, he says he's become a prison celebrity, with many inmates showing him their work and asking for advice. He tries to honor all requests for writing help, but also says he feels overwhelmed. We already have two new writers, encouraged by Eugene to send *The Beat* their poems. Maybe we'll have many new writers from Soledad, thanks to Eugene Weems. Here are a handful of his new poems.

Are You Still Down?

Don't say to me what you won't do
'Cause you will be the first one to break our truce
Watch your female, 'cause you don't know what's up
Especially if you're not on the streets and you're somewhere stuck
You don't know what's going on, and it's making you upset
'Cause she told you about her friend who made her sweat
When you're down and out, you wonder do she still care?
'Cause you don't get no support from her, and she's not there
What would you do? What could you say?
You can't do nothing but pray and be on your way
Trust is one thing that a female don't have
She tell her girlfriends you're faithful, and they just burst out and laugh

Doing Time

Once a crime is committed, we never think of the consequence
We do what our hearts desire and neglect the punishment
There's a place that many people dread to go
That place is prison, being in a cell on a level four
It's a stress box and all you do is sit and stress
Your life is put at a halt and you get plenty of rest
Watching your back because you never now what will happen next
A lot of people die in prison and may get stabbed in the neck
Meddling in other people's business, put in the mix
Fighting your rivals, as the police sit and watch the fight
They are quick to shoot the inmate, 'cause they thought he had a knife
If the police feel threatened, then they hit the alarm
They'll give you an assault charge if you brush up against their arm
Sitting in your cell as you think of things to do
In the back of your mind, you wonder why ol' girl ain't writing you
Too much negativity around you, it comes from all directions
It's hard to think positive in the California Corrections
All you see is the inmates getting down on the floor
Trying to avoid being stabbed in vicious riots that popped off in the
dayroom
The officer grabs the gun and you hear the loud boom
You try not to get caught up, especially if you have strikes
Because you'll be stuck stressing, living the horrible prison life

A Promise I Couldn't Keep

I promised you the world, something I knew I couldn't give to you
I promised I'll cross the ocean if that was necessary to be near you
I whispered in your ear and said the things you want to hear
Not trying to hurt your feeling or make you shed tears
I said I would never leave you, but left you stranded
Waiting for at least two hours, hoping you'd understand
Kissing you all over when I needed affection, and treating you like dirt
And never thought about how your feelings could get hurt
You call my phone, asking me to come get you
But I didn't want to be bothered, so I never came through
The only time I wanted you around was when your purse was phat
Or I wanted some sex, but nothing other than that
I've come to realize your personality is sweet
I wish I would of spent more time with you every day of the week

WILLIAM M. THURSTON

Here are two more excellent poems from William M. Thurston, who writes us from California State Prison-Solano in Vacaville. William has a keen ability to create images vivid enough to take us where he wants us to go, and in the following submissions, he takes us behind the walls and into the 'hood, and we wish all of us could leave the pain and danger found there behind.

The Boogieman

The boogieman does exist
And he's five-foot-eleven inches tall
Weights two hundred-ten pounds
Rooms the streets of "Oak Park"
And hangs out on the Avenues
By the green store

The boogieman sometimes sells candy
Two for thirty-five
Three for fifty-five
And four for sixty and he calls it "love,"
But in reality, he's poisoning my soul

The boogieman is that "hood-rat"
In the short pink skirt
And the white high-top Reeboks
Who kills me and my friends and sends us
To the pen for two hundred-plus years
With eighty and eighty-five percent

The boogieman is real talk-dot-com
And he falls from my mother's face like rain
In the form of tears
After sneaking into her room in the '70s
And stealing money from her purse

The boogieman really does exist!
But he can be defeated,
Simply by turning our backs on him
And walking away

Behind The Walls

The days are countless
Endless times
In prison cells
Confinement blinds.
Subdued emotions
Enemies befriend
A new law devours
Already convicted men.
What time is it anyway?
The clocks are small,
But we know it's about two
Because of the pounding on my wall.
And again the soldiers are restless
So soon shhh'll hit the fan
And there's nothing more chilling
Than a con' with a shank in his hand.
The days still countless;
Still endless times
On prison grounds
Still sunlight shines.
But watch out!
Be careful!
It can happen so quick!
Two rivals on the ground right there;
And another homie's been hit.
And who claimed that all nightmares
Only come in dreams?
Every day prisons haunt by existing
And by their blood-flowing streams.
So no matter what you think you know about it,
Or what you've heard or saw on TV,
The voice of the con is never heard enough
From behind the walls of the penitentiary.

D. LAVENDER

It is a privilege to have D. Lavender back in our paper for a second consecutive week, who drops his autobiographical flow from High Desert State Prison. The man has skills as he delivers a taste of the life — his life that brought him to the pen. We can only hope his reality will prevent other readers of the Beat from following in his footsteps and encourage them to take a second look at themselves.

My Life

Intense lil' youngster, yet never experienced being young,
riding stolen bikes and stealing cars, my criminal career has begun.
Momma expressed, "Boy, be good." To this I imagined I could,
Adversities to a troubled soul I misunderstood.
Twelve years young momma passed away in a car accident.
Twelve years old put the flag in my left back pocket and what
vanished was my innocence.
What happened to joys of life?
Shooting marbles on the sidewalk advanced to concealing knives.
GTA my first case, transferred to the Halls for a three-week stay,
caged in, locked away.
Life was blurry, a lil' boy living as a man didn't mean shhh to the jury.
Released with a chip on my shoulder, didn't realize the meaning of
growing older,
thoughts of a young gangster is total chaos and disorder.
Reflections of my shattered youth are seen in my grandma's
streaming tears
behind the glass of the LA County visiting booth.
"What's happening to you, son?" She asked.
Naively, I cracked a smile, but internally my heart was sad.
The game chose me! Exposed me and I can't break free
the judge sentenced me to prison I copped a deal for three.
1992, Corcoran State Prison wasn't what I expected
being accustomed to self-genocide,
these actions inside those walls were not respected,
yet my perception wasn't corrected,
absorbed in gang madness, the advice of cultural pride I rejected.
Completed my bid by the end of '94,
didn't learn shhh while inside and they paroled me out of
recidivism's door.
Added a lil' size to my thin frame
and French braids sprouted from my crop, a few new tattoos
name ringing for staying true,
hit the block, and got my props.
Introduced to a gangland war,
couldn't turn a corner without bullets riddling your car door.
No trade or skills,
I exited the penitentiary with one objective, to rob and steal.
True to the art, I immediately hit a lick, money was no object,
earlier in the game I learned how to make it quick.

My vacation didn't last long, within a month and a half I was back home
visiting my girl once again, behind the glass over tapped phones.
Return to prison — damn, I just got released.
Oh — did I mention in the midst of my insanity, I fathered a son,
Dec. 4, 1992 Keon's life begun
and like everything else positive in my life, I neglected him too
and continued living by the gun.
Could I blame it on being too young?
Nah, I just turned twenty-one.
Once again, experiencing the trials of prison living
forget, or forgotten, but never forgiving.
Dodging the blade, spreads made
and touched my tats up with a darker shade.
It's the middle of '96 and next week is my release date
buffed the whole 32 months, 195 and a half and 230 pounds was
my weight
didn't engage my mind, so recidivism remains my fate
my G-moms, lil' brother, and uncle picked me up at the gate.
Man! It feels great, I thought.
Still, I wasn't ready to accept my responsibility as a man,
so that feeling only remains a thought.
I spent time with my son, honestly I didn't have a change of heart
I was still pledged to the 'hood and my gun.
1996, the game engulfed every inch of my soul,
I walked in footsteps of a demon and my heart was hardened cold.
I'm keeping it real with you I caught an attempted murder robbery
I even tempted the prosecutions witnesses with bribery.
To no avail, the judge wanted to give me life.
My paid attorney copped a plea for a last minute deal.
Reality sunk in
I visualized fifteen years into the future being spent in the pen.
It's 2004 and I'm still behind the wall,
The difference comes with growth and development in productivity
to help soften my costly fall.
I've been blessed with another opportunity
You may not be so fortunate if you don't use your ingenuity.
Discipline yourself before you get caught up
Don't wait until you're stuck to try and reconstruct.
I speak as an example of a real-to-life-G
this life of concrete and steel has no guarantees
It's half-luck and half-skill if you ask me.
Do yourself a favor and sharpen your wits,
the system in this millennium is nothing to play with.

GELLÉ

Gellé Tolbert has seen plenty in her eighteen plus years of living — she knows the juvenile justice system as well as anyone. She's been there and done that, from SF/YGC, to 150, to numerous group homes, to Colorado, and to the CYA. By the time you read her latest poem, Gellé should be free — free from the system, meaning she has completed her Walden House program and no longer has a paper trail following her around. Today she writes, speaks and creates for The Beat Within as a solid and valuable colleague.

The Highest Price

I paid the price for my mistakes.
They molded me into the person I was.
My hard head
My wild ways.
The days I lost due to being incarcerated
In CYA.
In juvenile hall
In county jail
In my own personal hell.
I left the block and opened shop in my house
And wondered why the feds were on the roof.
I paid a high price.
I let the darkness over shadow my light for a while.
I lost the war against the oppressives.
My high price was losing the ones I love and not being able
to go to the funerals.

My high price was losing a special part of me and not
knowing how to deal with it.
I got angry
I wanted to fight
I wanted to die.
The bad part about me wanting to die is I just wanted to
die just for the death of it.
'Cause see, there is no ideal death.
But I wanted the worst for myself.
Today I live in the garden,
Not of Eden but of Life.
The life where I wasn't alone in the scheme of things.
Did anyone ever tell me I wasn't one of the regulars?
Kill me for just being me.
Don't say I'm dead because I couldn't be what you wanted.
My highest price was having to remember all of this,
But then again I share it as a lesson.

SIR TURTLE The following piece is from Jesus J. Rosales, aka Sir Turtle. He writes to us from the SHU in Corcoran State Prison. In the following pieces he gives his respect and props to many Beat Within and Without writers — including himself. In case we don't give him enough respect and/or props — here goes — mad love for you and keep them comin'.

Much Love To Everyone

To: Broken Glass...

First and foremost, my utmost respect to you as always. This is Sir Turtle coming at you from the big house (prison) and I just want to tell you that I've read and re-read your pieces. I love all your pieces and I must say you're very smart and intelligent and you got to choose what you want out of life and you could be anything that a beautiful, Caribbean, Puerto Rican, and Australian queen wants to be in life. Just choose the right path and door you want to take. Only you can make your decision on the life you want to live.

I'll be praying for you in two different prayers. Have you read my pieces in The Beat Without?

Lastly, 1st prayer is the Christian way. 2nd prayer is in my Native Indian language!

Keep your head up and stay strong. Don't let no one get you down.

Respectfully...

Questions For The Youngsters:

Do you love yourself?

Do you respect yourself?

Do you love your family? Like you moms, dads, sisters, brothers, auntie, uncles, grandparents!

What do you want out of life?

What are your goals for a better life?

What is it about gangs that makes you want to be in one?

What can you do to stay out of Juvy, CYA, group homes, boys' camps, jail and prisons?

Do you know the meaning of a gangster? Think real hard!

Do you know the meaning of a thug?

10. Why you trying to be something that you're not?

Well you better think real hard on these questions, 'cause only you can change your life, not your homies!

Respectfully.

To Beat Within and Beat Without Writers

Sneezy:

Hey girl, you got some powerful poems. Maybe you could publish a book on your poems and make money. You're in my prayers.

Kane:

What's up? When I read your poems I can relate to them and I know some real OG's that's been where you're at. Stay strong.

Troy:

Where you at? I want to read some more of your stuff.

Ms. Martinez, 150 Crew counselor:

I can understand where you're coming from and I hope to read some more of your pieces.

Broken Glass:

Your poem put tears in my eyes for real, and don't let nobody get you down, home girl.

Michelle:

I've been to CYA for escape from Juvy in 1988 and they gave me 7 years 6 months — "life" as a juvenile — but I only did 3 years and 4 months. Like they say "only the strong survive." You're in my prayers.

Michael Markhasev:

The famous Wardog told me that you send me your respect and I send mind back to you as well. Nice pieces.

Amber Ramos:

I'll keep you in my prayers 'cause your son needs you out there with him.

Sir Mel-Roc:

Stay strong; enjoyed your pieces

Mr. Wardog:

My utmost respect to you as always homie. Your pieces touch my heart and my prayers go out to you.

Hey, Sir Turtle:

Keep it coming with your parts of life for the Beat Without and damn, you been through a whole lot. Waiting to read some more of your life, songs and poems.

TROAS BARNETT After a long absence, Troas Barnett, aka Sankofa, is back in the pages of The Beat Without. As he explains below, Troas' absence has been due to an altercation he got into with COs, which has resulted in a transfer out of, and back to, his current home at CSATF Corcoran. We hope all of you feel this cautionary tale, as well as the advice dropped in the last couple paragraphs. We also hope that Troas' health and legal situation continues to get better.

Hey Beat Readers

I wrote this piece to say I'm not gone from The Beat pages, just temporarily bogged down in court proceedings. For those readers that don't know, I, Sankofa, was involved in a rumble with my captors back in November. The results of all that transpired are still unfolding, most recently with my being charged as the aggressor. No weapon was involved, and all accounts have been exaggerated beyond belief. But such is the system to blame the victim.

I sustained a serious cranial injury, and other injuries, too! They've beefed up their injuries by way of manipulative photography. So it's come to me against "the system" on this one.

My knowing I'm only one man up against it gives me reason for pause. I would like to take this moment out to tell the youth and adult readers that the system is not

designed for one to win. The forces and outright power can / will rush upon you like a storm and overcome you like a wave. I would like nothing more than the youth exercise and cultivate their reasoning and judgment. In doing so, it will serve as a compass that can help the youth navigate the seas of life. In many ways, The Beat serves this purpose.

Upon my return, I plan to raise another theme — psychology — because I believe that it will serve as the ultimate remedy by getting to the bottom of emotional, social, and environmental issues; broken homes, abandonment, molestation, self-hate, etc. I hope to launch this soon, but I'm researching the topics first so as to give it to you clear. This I hope will serve the youth well in development.

I'll be back before you know it, but never settle for less and always do your best! Once again, Sankofa speaks.

JASON FRANKS

This remarkable "mea culpa" — strong self-condemnation in defense of a family that did all the right things — comes to us from Jason Franks, the "Reno Orphan," in Corcoran State Prison. In this strong defense of family, the "Orphan" comes to terms with his reckless past, blaming only himself for his misdeeds, and asking for just one more chance. The point is made crystal clear in the poem that follows, "I Stand Ashamed." (We have to say, we also loved the final poem, "Same Sex George W," which indicts politicians in general and the President in particular.)

Family Values And Individual Choices

Coming from an above average middle class family, my environment is quite abstract to my family, as it was initially to myself. I had long labeled my crime as one of morals and principles, a rapist reaping what he sowed.

For the first 10-12 years of my subsequent incarceration, that justification, denial and reluctance to face reality all played their part in an oh-so-faux sense of peace I embraced early on.

With somewhat of an identity crisis at thirty, I, at long last, took the inventory of who I was, and what I had to show for the first thirty years. The only common denominator was my family. Even as it has shrunk in size, the amount of love certainly has not.

The predicate of my value as a "Person" as well as a "Man" was cultivated and maintained by my family. The value system instilled, my sense of right and wrong, my parameters of fair play structured by their example and constant display of noble character. My ability to have compassion for others, even in this environment (a rarity, sometimes mistaken for a weakness) can also be attributed to them, further charged and fortified by the compassion and forgiveness demonstrated and even offered to a convict that continues to incur rough patches.

Sayings and connotations: "Blood is thicker than water;" "Unconditional Love;" "There are no bonds stronger than those between a parent and their child..." Although well intentioned and in the most declarative terms, with strong hints of adulation, these phrases fail, as do I, to do my family justice.

Via my actions, they have run the gauntlet numerous times. While I was invincible, displaying my gunslinger mentality, stricken with a hardcore case of "Reckless Abandonment" I struck at every conceivable level: emotionally, physically, spiritually and even financially.

Dealing with me was once paralleled as "Like being run over by a bulldozer and surviving." I stand ashamed to have done anything to them or anyone for that matter. Acknowledging what a deviant I was for a time is really the only way to offer a glimpse through my eyes how special and important they are to me.

My family's wish — through all my felonies, transgressions and considerable lapses of judgment — has been for me to get another shot at being a regular guy.

Now, after fifteen years behind these walls, our desires are common: to clear these gates for one more try. On the real, though, I would gladly, without hesitation, forego, pawn or exchange any and all absolution I might ever be afforded just to prove to them they were right all along.

They raised a good, compassionate man with strong morals and a value system instilled in me. I offer them the opportunity to talk in relative tenses of my character and success, as opposed to tenuous claims of how much potential I squandered or "could" have been, or how much I "would" have done.

My family gave me the foundation. Now I look for the arena outside these walls to show my gratitude.

Same Sex George W

In an election he barely won
The newly elected mayor spent a ton
Still in the shadow of "Moondog" Brown
Young Gavin had to shake up the town

The beautiful and famous City By The Bay
With licenses available became City full of gays
The youngest mayor to date
Seemingly in a hurry to seal his fate

Is same-sex marriage a crime
Or is it really just a matter of time?
The young liberal started the trend
That filled the cities pockets and took the State
Supreme Court
to end

Arnold told the Attorney General to make them quit
Two tries and he still managed to blow it
Will the state courts make 'em rescind
Or is that a Constitutional Amendment we smell in the wind?

A big to-do for Queer Eye for the Straight Guy
How much voyeuristic crap will America buy?
Over in Iraq our sons and daughters are dying
While the Administration maintains
they're not lying

Richard Clarke, a disgruntled employee
9-11 Commission is in session we're about to see
We found Saddam Hussein in a hole
And still the price of gas is on a roll

Al Gore was plain and a bore
Better than being a special-interest whore
It doesn't matter what you say
After Florida we know our votes don't count anyway

Now the Pledge of Allegiance is on trial
How much more of our great country will we defile
Truth is George W. is a damn liar
A reckless cowboy this country needs to fire

I Stand Ashamed

I stand ashamed
For all the drama I put you through
For all that I told you that wasn't true

I stand ashamed
For all the money you paid in my name
For all the empty promises of change

I stand ashamed
For all the many times I failed you
For ever making you feel blue

I stand ashamed
For knowing things would stay the same
For treating your spouse like a lame

I stand and proclaim
One thing is really true
I'm sorry and I do love you

THE MONTHLY OFFENDER

Those wonderful youngsters who contribute to the Monthly Offender have done it again. Unfortunately, we can't reprint all the fine pieces from this wonderful publication of the Whatcom County Juvenile Detention Center in Washington State, so we have selected three longer pieces and one short poem. With topics ranging from the reality of prison life, to the reality of gay life, to the devastation of the drug life, and finally to the pain of so many young lives, we bring you the young men and women from The Monthly Offender.

Straight Talk From Prison

What's up? This is Brian Lane, and this is my straight talk. If you are interested in really changing, then this is something that you need to read. If not, there is no point in going and further.

I am 22 years old, and I've been locked up since I was sixteen. I started getting locked up when I was just into my teens. I used to write the same poems in the Monthly Offender that I am reading now. Poems about dreams of a better tomorrow, poems about anger and hate and frustration. But they all ended with the possibility and hope for brighter days to come.

I used to sit alone in my cell and cry myself to sleep out of sorrow and self-pity. I know and remember the frustrated desire to turn my life around, and the lack of opportunities that stopped me from doing it. I remember the cold streets and I remember the hunger. I remember everything you are all experiencing now.

I used to wait for the chance to change my life, and I cursed everybody but myself when I didn't see it. Now, in retrospect, I see that it was all there in front of me. The path out of the rain and into the light, the better life that we all desire was there all the time. I just needed to take that first step. What is it?

The first step that I refer to is humility. Humble yourself. Admit to your parents and your probation officers that you're only kid, and you need help. I couldn't. I wouldn't. Now look at me. I wish to hell I could be a young teen again. I wish that I could have accepted help. I wish that I would have turned to my elders and asked them to guide me.

I wish that I could get out and see all of you kids involved in your communities, going and collecting commodities for your elders and volunteering your time to the next generation's education, and finishing your own education. I wish I could see you successfully completing your drug and alcohol treatment programs instead of becoming a violent criminal like I did.

I only pray to the Creator that when I get out that I stay on the Good Road. Who knows? Maybe someday we'll meet at a powwow or a canoe race, and you'll have babies and be happy. Or if you can't swallow your pride and take that first step, maybe I'll see you in here doing years and years instead of days and months. I pray for you and yours...

-Brian Lane, Stafford Creek Corrections Center

Gay People Are Everywhere

I support gay marriages because I know for a fact that gay people are everywhere, and that they deserve to get the same rights as everyone else. Most people who say they don't know any gay people probably do, it's just that the gay people they know haven't told them yet.

I didn't used to like gay people at all because I was taught that they were sinners and child molesters. When I actually met a gay person, I was blown away because he wasn't any different than anyone else I knew. In fact, I knew this guy for most of my life, and never knew he was gay.

That's when I began to figure out that I had been taught wrong. Gay people are no different than anyone else. Just like with straights, there are some good ones and there are some bad ones. There's a lot of straight people in this world that have no business getting married, but no one is stopping them, so gay people ought to have the same rights.

-Richard S.

The Pain

The pain that feel today just won't go away.
Not today, not tomorrow, all I feel is hate and sorrow.
The ridicule, the blame, the hurt and the shame.

Words belt out as I scream and shout,
Regret eats at me until I apologize
But then once again the hate comes back to life.
-Kaysha Z.

I was blown away because he wasn't any different than anyone else I knew.

My Life

My name is Sasha, and I'm gonna let you know a little about my life and how I have gotten through it. I'm going to start off by telling you a little about my childhood growing up. It was a pretty stable household that consisted of my mom, dad, little sister and me.

It all started about the end of elementary school. My dad would leave for a couple days at a time and come back acting like nothing was wrong. See, my dad had a drug and alcohol problem and it was getting worse and worse as the months went on. I was about 11 years old when it all ended.

It was about 1:30 a.m. and I got woken up by my uncle. I saw flashing lights out in the driveway, and when I went into the living room, I saw a bunch of people sitting in there, including my aunt, my mom and little sister and the pastor of our church. I got really scared when I didn't see my dad anywhere. Finally, someone told me that he had been taken to the hospital.

Anyways, me and the rest of my family went to the hospital to see what was going to happen with my dad. We waited for almost two hours, but in the end the outcome was horrible.

I was sitting there and my uncle and aunt sat down, and the look on their faces was unpleasant in every way. After that I found out that my dad had passed away, and I couldn't control myself. I started hysterically crying nonstop. They had to hold me down. I didn't know what I was going to do. From then on it was all downhill.

A few months later I found out how my father died. At first I had been told that it was a heart attack, but I later found out that he died from a heroin overdose. That made his death ten times worse than it already was. When I started middle school, I began smoking weed and drinking because I thought I was cool and maybe people would like me because I used. This went on for about a couple of years until the beginning of 8th grade. At this time I started experimenting with different drugs like meth, cocaine and others.

Once I started doing these heavier drugs, I felt like I couldn't stop. So far I have been to treatment two times and I am currently waiting to go for the third time. The first time I went was for meth and the second time was for cocaine. It seems like my drug use has progressed from the last time I went to treatment. The last month I was out using was the worst and the most I've ever used. If I wouldn't have gotten caught for my warrants, I would have still been out there using or maybe even dead. That's how bad my addiction has gotten.

My mom and I have our ups and downs since my father's death. She's been trying so hard to take care of me and my sister, and I've just made it harder for her. I've beat myself up for that. I don't do it intentionally, but it just makes her job as our mother a whole lot harder.

I also regret not having been the best role model for my little sister. She looks up to me so much, and I feel that if she starts using drugs or skipping school that it would be my fault, and I probably would beat myself up for that also. It's one of my life's goals to show my sister the right path so that she can grow up successful in her later years as a teen and as an adult.

I pray to God that this next time in treatment will be my last. What I always say is, "Hope for the best but expect the worst." Well, I hope that someone, somewhere will read this and just think about things a little more before they make the same mistakes that I have made. I have hurt my family and some close friends so badly because of my addiction. Even when I know that I didn't do it intentionally, that's the worst part of it.

-Sasha S.

PAYASA This is Payasa's second time joining us in The Beat Without. This time, instead of writing from a group home, she is home free in Woodland, CA, and she's trying to maintain. The transition is difficult but she's doing it. Congratulations Payasa! She hits us up with a handful of well-written poems, two about love, one about death and another about what people deserve. She's got a lot of love in her. We hope that she continues to stay free and do the right thing. Keep writing!

Your Love

You take me to a better place
when you're on my mind
But when I'm alone
I find it hard not to cry
To me you're everything I could ever want
It's for your touch that I always long
I often wake up and wonder if it's real
How can two people's love grow stronger than steel
Regardless what we go through, we take it side by side
For your love forever, I would fight
I know you can't always be there but baby that's okay
I want you to know I love you always.

Deserve

So much regret, also so much pain
So much wanders in and out of my brain
Of the good things, not; many of the bad things, a ton
All caused by a second worth of fun
I can't change them, so forever with me they live
From being a victim to creating great sin
How did I become this so heartless and cold?
I broke your heart when you gave it to me to mold
Let's not forget you hurt me too
Writing others, calling me boo
Well it never worked out, it never will
Leave me alone, go and chill
Don't try to act innocent, you're as free as a bird
What you get is what you deserve...

Death

Everyone's gathered around the funeral bed
Brought together 'cause a homegirl's dead
The one they knew as Payasa, who always made them laugh
But never got to know her, never gave her a chance
They never listened to her problems,
they had problems of their own
But when they needed her, a helping hand was always shown
If you look around, everyone bares a tear
But remember you pushed her away
when she tried to share her fears
When she felt happiness, you were doing something else
But once you needed her, you called her on your cell
So in all honesty, don't fake you care about her death
Emotionally you put the cuete (gun) to her head.

I Pledge My Love

You're all I've ever wanted, all I've ever dreamed
To kill you is to kill me, I pray you never leave
I know you never will, 'cause the love is so strong
Who is too opposed to this heavenly bond?
We've seen hard times when the sky was gray
But even then, you've never felt the rain
From day one, I've sheltered you away from the cold
I pledge your love to me, you granted my wish
It'll be like heaven to embrace you with a kiss
You're my motivation in my daily life
I see things differently
when I think of your big brown eyes
I see a world of love, you take away my blues
This love is reserved strictly just for you.

MIZ. ASTRONOMER We would like to warmly welcome our new intern Miz. Astronomer — today is her first day, and today is her first contribution to The Beat Without. It is our hope this is the first of many pieces from this talented young poet. We do not know too much about her, but we are glad she is here helping us out. Big props to Miz Astronomer for coming through, to her school MetWest out in Oakland, and to her teacher Savannah Sange.

My Thoughts

Well, before I talk about anything, let me tell you how I found out about The Beat. I go by the name Miz. Astronomer, and I go to a small internship-based high school called MetWest High in Oakland, and they believe that on Tuesdays and Thursdays that we should be out "pursuing" our passions.

Well, I had recently lost an internship about two weeks ago and my teacher was helping me find a new one. She looked up Youth Magazines and Publications on Google.com and The Beat Within popped up. So, well here I am. My teacher, Savannah Shange, told me that I should check it out.

On the first day that I came here, I got to read some of the writings in the latest publication and it made me feel inspired to work here even more. I mean how many people that are incarcerated get their poetry and writing published? Obviously not many! Now I leave you with the following question. If there are people that are imprisoned that can write something SO deep, then what's stopping the people that aren't?!? Think about it.

Until then I'm out...

How many people that are incarcerated get their poetry and writing published?

WILLIAM GRAJEDA

The following pieces come to us from William Grajeda. He was released from the SHU in Pelican Bay (after being down for 10 years) in January. We were hoping to tell you that he's still out enjoying his freedom, but that's not possible. The other day we heard the terrible news that he was incarcerated again. It makes our hearts break when we see talented and wonderful people going back into the system. We can only hope for the best. If you're reading this William, keep in touch.

The OG's Past, The Juvenile's Present

— The Lesson: Still Waiting To Be Learned

What's happening lil' g? So you are kickin' back on the spot blazing a fat one with your homeboys, drinking forties and slangin' the grind while you peep down the street to see who that firme hyna is who has that intoxicatin' scent and mesmerizin' walk...

You give the blaze a twist, you tip the forty on the curb for the last homie — RIP, you and the homeboy remember another time long forgotten. Then with eyes low keyed behind the locs and the new fit starched down, you hop in the ride and roll through the jungle to live another night on the edge and tempt the fates to surrender itself to the unruly perils of your desperate whims...

The street lights are blaring, the car stereo is blasting Mac 10's cut, "Do The Damn Thing," your heart is pumping, your pulse is throbbing, your eyes are mischievously concealed; your adrenaline is on fire and your hand is dangerously inching closer to the nine clip...

You may not know it yet lil' vato, but you are in a moment where your vida is walking on a high wire that runs over the middle of a two sided bottomless pit, and on one side is a deep black hole and on the other side is a dark fire that has an eternal flame waiting to collect its next soul. You may not realize it yet lil' g, but in that moment of flying high, slangin' the grind and creeping through the jungle with your hand movin' closer to the clip, the stakes of your life is being gambled in a no win street game of prison or death...

But hey lil' g, I am not the one to preach right from wrong. I know life is hard, lil' vato, especially growing up in the ghetto or if you have moms and pops in the game or lost in the jungle too. After all, you are not sitting in Juvenile Hall for no reason right!? Si, la vida loca is hard on the young even more so because the young are so susceptible to ignorance and corrupted influences.

Then there is that taste of adrenaline flying high and your pulse beating dangerously close to the edge. Yes lil' vato, then there is that crazy taste which once tasted becomes the perilous fate of our lives.

We give the blaze a twist, we tip the forty on the curb for the homie, RIP, we check our scrilla and tighten our grind, we reminisce for a second on yesterday's game, then with eyes low keyed behind the locs and the new fit creased down, we hop in the ride and roll through the jungle to live another night on the edge and tempt the fates to surrender itself to the unruly perils of our desperate whims...

The streetlights are blaring, and the lowride system is blasting X-Zibit's cut, "Whacha See Is Whacha Get," the heart is pumping, the pulse is throbbing, our eyes are mischievously concealed... Our adrenaline is on fire and the hand is dangerously inching closer to the clip...

I look at you from behind the walls of my prison cage and I see you, lil' vato, and I feel a dry tear drop deep within; you look at me, lil' g, from behind your juvenile wall and you dream the vida loca dream.

Looking around in a suspended time, I pause — I see me behind a prison wall, I see you behind a juvenile wall, and I see the rest in between waiting to join us or already buried six feet deep...

Well then lil' g, if I haven't learned by now, then I look at you and hope you will learn. And if you haven't learned either then I look up into the skies beyond and say "perhaps" to myself, hopefully someone will have learned. Respectively...

In Between The Two Shadows (A Poem)

Sleepy eyes peer from behind a huckleberry shrub and a purple cloud hangs over the misty eve, there is a mischievous glint that glistens in between the silence and keeps the shadows undisturbed as the sleepy eyes and the over hanging reflections of the purple clouds stand still at a closing distance, separated only by the slow waning shadows of darkness, separated only by the absence of night's quarter moonlight...

Two shadows tangle in the dark arm in arm, hand in hand their silhouettes moving in and out of the wild caressing their bestial instincts. Perhaps tempting the fears within, perhaps tasting their draught of unruliness as their confined liberty escapes from the dark cages that lie concealed within the deep shadows of the dragon's dungeon...

One shadow steps left into the darkness tempting those silent fears within, another shadow steps right into the darkness tasting a wild drop from the chalice of their hidden unruliness. Two shadows run into each other and in step with the melodies of "tempting fears" and "silent unruliness" — while the eyes peering from behind the huckleberry shrub wait in wild anticipation and the purple clouds overhanging the eve keeps the closing distance between the eerie silence and the dark shadows separated from joining the sacred ritual of our mischievous dance...

The La Vida Loca Dance

Sounds of the desolate streets sing and dance to the melodies of a dark time that has been suspended within a shadow of still ruins left over from the vacant lots of weary complexions once lively in wealthy youth which have long scene faded away in the graveyard dust wind that carry upon its onerous breeze, the cold fiery breath of that crazy impoverished beast who never wearing in the night nor slumbers in midday...

A street lamp flickers dimly beneath the alleys of vagrant's mischief and the footsteps of dark shadows dance on the solid gravel moving to the foreboding melody of their resigned fates, while the stale acrid stench of gutter sweat intermingled with the dark odors of prison garb and untimely deaths fill the nostrils of their crazy life that tangos in between the two paths of forsaken destinies; the two destinies of crimson violets and blue-grays...

"Clink, Clank," ... as you drop the clip, "bang, bang," ... as you pop the glock... you hit the switch on the low and tint the window's as you ride... you dim the lights as you creep through the jungle like a predator that is hunting his prey... your wild eye's roaming over the dark plains looking in the shadows behind the alley walls, looking into the darkness that envelops you in its perilous life ... you drink the 40, sip the Hen, pass the chronic, then comes the speed, the heroin, the sherm, the coke, the crack house, the hard slang, the cold grind then finally the brick walls and the dead ends ... but still, crimson violets hold you captive, but still the blue-grays caress your fragile soul.

"You can't let go, you can't let go, you can't let go," the struggle within, "yes you can," yes you can let go ... but still you put on the locs, peep down the street and load the clip anyways ... then you think again briefly and put everything down ... "No, this is enough," you say ... but that only lasts for about two seconds or after you have done your last teardrop, then it starts all over again... the crazy dance begins anew ...

The sounds of desolate streets sing and dance to the melodies of a dark time that has been suspended within a shadow of still ruins leftover from the vacant lots of those weary complexions who were once lively in wealthy youth have seen long faded away in the graveyard dust that whirls and whispers, that can only be heard closely in the distant wind that carries upon its onerous breeze the cold fiery breath of that crazy impoverished beast that never wearies in the night nor slumbers in midday...

One soul dances in the night, another soul dances in midday, two souls dancing in the shadows of the crazy impoverished, moving to the melodies that play upon the jungles wild.

You dance with the clip; you dance with the fast high

You dance on the cold grind...

The same way you dance to the melodies of settled fates

You can dance to the melody that changes the fates of your crimson violets and blue-grays... you can dance out of the shadow of that crazy impoverished beast...

**you can dance out of
the shadow
of that crazy
impoverished beast ...**

WILLIAM GRAJEDA (CONT.)

The Ghetto Dialogues

1.) Savage streets burn cold in the eve, meager hustles move hastily while the shadows that come out at night pursue the ghetto tracks of the fast life.

2.) Clips drop into the gutters of time, bullets are left scattered in between the unsettled dusk, the peeking dawns and dark eyes peer from behind ragged alley curtains wearing a naked grimace that has a cruel glint of twisted curiosity.

3.) A batch of hot cookies are passed around for the guests... a treat of green skies and orange clouds, a taste of oblivion in between the wreckage to forget the scars that run across the spine of their soul.

4.) Starched threads dressed to kill, a touch of Three Flowers to keep the style smooth, but it's the thirty-eight special that keeps everything cool, that keeps everything a little too cool...

5.) Chrome grips, iced scrilla clips, a crimson puddle, a crooked cop, then a swift blow to the dome, you missed the cat that was your ace in the sandbox.

6.) Broken forties litter the driveway, an empty fifth sits on the porch, a neighborhood dog rummages through the trash can while a lethargic cat watches from a safe distance across the street — perhaps waiting his turn to get a garbage share?

7.) "Pop, pop, pop"... you hear glass shatter, panicked screams, somebody yells "get down, get down" — a few more pops ring in between you and the distance... you feel your body, everything seems okay but the person lying next to you wasn't so lucky...

8.) Looking up, the heavens appear dark. Every thing in between the space that lies between you and the starlit darkness is so confusing, Neptune, Mars, Jupiter, Venus, God...it just doesn't make any sense sometimes...

9.) There are crumbs on the table, a child cries with an empty stomach, there is no more food because the welfare check is never enough, never enough for six kids, okay then it's time to push the grind, did you hear me?? It's time to push the grind... The baby needs food, the baby needs diapers.

10.) First Juvenile Hall jumpsuits, then Camp uniforms then if you're lucky a string of foster homes and group placements, for everybody else there is the dirty crowded county jails, broken down CYAs, cold gray prison cells, dark SHUs, and the graveyards, the graveyards...

11.) Barbed wire fences around a shabby house, a fire burns in an oil barrel while a wino warms his hands, a corner liquor store covered in spray paint marks the territory of the 'hood and the run down park, in the middle of it all is the silent interval where everyone comes to barter a strand of gray hairs.

12.) A pair of bloodshot eyes dart up and down the block; "I got the sack, I got the sack," a pair of bug eyes dart back and forth trying to spot crooked cops, jacked up lots and baking soda burn, "I got the boost, I got the boost" kick me down proper...

13.) A little boy with a dirty face and big smile chases the ice cream truck down the street, his pockets empty but he has a quarter in his hand to buy his share of happiness for the day...

14.) Perhaps you should look at me, perhaps I should look at you, perhaps we should both look at each other seriously?? But instead we mock or sneer at one another from a distance and up close we smile with disdain and pretend concern...

15.) The dice rolls in a circle of sinister minds, g's stack up on the cold grind, fast triggers leave a trail of lost fates and the beast roars within;

16.) An ominous stone gun tower looms over the evening of youth, a chipped tombstone awaits its next destiny and Mister Clever Dimwit is trying to escape them both and get his kicks, that is until he trips into the mare's nest...

17.) Rims are spinning on the low, hot ice gleams on the surface of wildfires and a stray raven comes to fly you towards the forest of deadwood;

18.) Do you know the scratching sound of the cat's paw?? Twist up a tree, sprinkle some magic on the leaf, add a touch of sweet amnesia and "try me" lonely one — try the cat's paw...

19.) There is a man on the curb wearing torn garments, one sock on with a dirty big toe sticking out and pint of wine in his hands; he takes a swig and he sees the stars, Jaguars, mansions, designer clothes, diamonds and prime rib. When the bottle is empty and he has sobered up some, he thinks — "hey, that could have been me!!" Then he goes and buys another bottle of Night Train dreams...

20.) A mother weeps in desperate pains, a father doesn't know how to handle hard times, black eyes, bruised bodies, a needle, a burnt spoon simmering beneath a flame, there's sancho, there's sancha in between the absence of each other, then they meet again to start all over...

21.) Prison bars cast a stony reflection over silhouette, your shadow bears the indelible complexions of perdition's cage, still you move the hustle, push the grind, burn the g's, pimp the scheme, empty clips, layout shady trips, peep out the knock, re-check the game, spot the crooked cop, and shake the hot spots;

22.) So the stage has been set then! Broken street lamps flicker in the alley, stone prison walls chill the winter's eve, graveyards keep the lost souls company while the forsaken come to play their roles on the stage of la vida loca.

The Cholo's Contemplation

So you got one hand on the nine grip, and one hand on the scrilla clip while you peep down the block and duck from the caps that are popping off on your spot... You got the grind moving and the hustle burning while you are checking out the script from your kitchen window to make sure no one's trying to flip a batch of hot cakes on your park grill while you're checking in....

So you got one eye on the spinners spinning up the block and your other eye on the dice rollin' over the corner crackpots while you're hittin' the fences every time you see that crooked-ass cop trying to creep or Task Force on the raid to jack up the game...

What's happening lil' g? I hear the pigs squealing on the block and the vultures circling close to the next body bag on the street, as the grind is pushed and the hustle burns — we look at each other in the shadows of our darkness...

Q-vo lil' vato, como estas? I see the ride cruising through the barrio, I hear the cuete blasting and the balas popping on the calle loco, while you sport your pride on the sleeve and slang your ends in la vida loca....

I feel your heart beating lil' vato and your dreary eyes looking into the wild... I feel your hand trembling lil' vato as the bullets miss you by inches this time... But you play it smooth... you got lucky this time and so you will be trucha for a while, but then as tiempo goes by you get loose again and you don't see your grind slipping because you're

spending more time on rolling the dice, unloading the clip and hittin' the fences every time the Task Force is on the prowl...

You pass the forty, twist the joint and sprinkle a pinch of your special touch for the night... You're going to dance, you're going to ride, you're going to fly, you're going to live on the edge a little more dangerously than usual and who knows, tonight might be the night you conquer the world, or at least the world that is stuck in your mind's eye anyway...

The sirens are blaring, the medics are yelling, "CPRI! CPRI!" The police have the crime scene tape-wrapped around a body laid out, in the distance you hear the cuete popping, the helicopter spotting, the stray dog barking and the hooker stands on the corner looking while the trick peeps out the car window...

You hear the grind pushing, you feel the hustle burning, and you are caught in the alleyways of la vida loca...

Your eyes are bloodshot, the scars on your body feel cold, your ears are ringing from last years gunshots, your pockets feel empty even though you have a stack of g's in your scrilla clip... you can't remember baby girl's name that you hooked up with last night, your closest homeboy just lost his life and there you are standing in the alleyways of la vida loca looking in your hand with those dreary eyes, wondering if you will give the dice another roll, the ride another spin, the grind another night of pushing and the hustle another day to burn on the fire...

So there you are in the alleyways of la vida loca contemplating whether or not to gamble the fate of your precious life again...

CHINO Chino has occasionally graced the pages of *The Beat* throughout the years as an artist as well as a writer. This week he steps up huge per our request to write about what it means to being a Native American. Chino writes us from the SHU in Pelican Bay State Prison. He delivers an incredible, well thought out piece that will definitely shine some light on who he is.

Native American, American Indian

There isn't nothing American about being Indian in America today! You can't "be" Indian unless you're born Indian, and even that falls under scrutiny in the prison system.

When outsiders look at me, the first thing they notice is that I am Indian and they ask, "What tribe are you from?" Like that's supposed to make me feel as if they're sincere and educated on all of the tribes that comprise the native people throughout this mother Earth. I say Lakota. "Oh! I never heard of that." To myself, I say uh huh, that's what I thought! So I ease their uncomfortableness by saying, "Certainly you heard of the Sioux?" Okay, yeah — then, I go into some deep history with them.

"Did you know the actual word 'Sioux' is French?" They say, "What? How is that?" So I briefly run down that French mercenaries and fortune seekers employed Crows (the natural born enemy of the plains Lakota, Nakota, and Dakota) as scouts. the Crow were explaining to the Frenchmen in their native Crow language that the Lakota were "snakes in the grass" when describing the Lakota because the Lakota used to creep and stalk their enemies silently and with stealth. The French only understood the Crow what sounded like the name "Sue" and wrote it down in French as "Sioux," unaware that the word was being used in a derogatory fashion by the Crow. So today most people think the word Sioux stands for snake. Do you think they came away from that having a better understanding of what tribe I'm from? Nope, I think they'll forget that tidbit of knowledge I dropped on their melons.

I'm proud of my heritage and culture. I'm full-blooded Lakota. Only other skins and Lakota will ask me what band I'm from. You see, there are seven bands of the Lakota: Oglala, Hunkpapa, Black Kettle, Yankton, Teton, Sixeton, and Blackfoot — Blackfeet is a whole 'nother tribe from Montana territory, so I tell them Oglala, same band of Lakota as the great war chief Crazy Horse. Only in prison will other skins ask me if I'm enrolled. I say yeah, I'm enrolled in the Crow Creek Indian Agency that represents the Sioux, or Lakota, in Ft. Thompson, South Dakota. Then, I'm asked to produce my enrollment number. All registered Indians are given a government number!

I get upset at this, but I see the need for such drastic measures because nowadays in the system, you got all walks of life trying to infiltrate the sacred circle of the people, in prison as well as in society, by saying they're part Indian — 1/4, 1/2, whatever. All the skins see is their blonde hair and blue eyes, or their Mexican-Spanish surnames. I know that some of these people are merely trying to come in out of their own self-made storms, or they need a safe haven to hide out from their ghosts. The sacred circles should not have to put up with that, but they do. As for me, if anyone has Indian blood in them, I don't care what they look like.

I trip on this: on Mexican or Spanish surnames not being Indian. Anyone with a Mexican surname is half-Indian, half-Spaniard. The half-Indian part happens to be Aztec, or any of the many indigenous people throughout Northern and Southern America such as the Toltec, Olmec, Mixtec, Maya, or Inca. I bet a lot of you young readers don't realize that one of the last Incan leaders to die was Tupac Amaru! That's where the rapper Tupac got his name.

I'm writing this piece because I don't ever see any of my Indian people writing in *The Beat* or writing about their heritage. I don't know why. I do know that I grew up in Oakland, California, where there are a lot of Indian folk

living in the Bay Area, and in the City, too, so I thought it's about that time I put down for the people. I don't want to make some political speech or preach, but bring some awareness to the plight of the people.

Take my situation. I'm slammed down in the SHU and this place doesn't have any religious or spiritual services for my people. If I had to talk to someone, such as if there was a death in the family, guess who they'd bring in to see me? A priest — not that there's anything wrong with that gesture, it's just that I'm not Catholic! I'm Indian, so I need a medicine man or a holy man to come talk to me. That's my culture.

Being Indian in prison isn't any better than being Indian in today's society! We have to fight for everything we got or get. To me, that's a cause worth struggling for. I like to pray and smoke the sacred pipe and cleanse my spirit in a sweat lodge ceremony, burn sage and sweet grass, all aspects and elements of my culture — I can't do any of that, nor does this SHU make up for the lack of these services. They can take that away from me, but they can't take the Indian in me away.

I'm not going to sit still and not do nothing about this treatment. I've already out in motion some legal maneuvers to bring about some change. That's the only way my captors will comply, if someone challenges their confinement and conditions therein. I'm alone, but one voice can be heard loud and clear.

There's a lot of misconceptions and stereotypes towards Indian people in America. No one else will stand up next to us in our struggle for equal rights. It's on us Indians to make a stand for ourselves. For years, decades, and centuries, our people have been knocked down, oppressed, and forced to live and exist under the yoke of a government that today is still bent on trying to practice genocide against the native people. Today, it's called assimilation into American society! Ever wonder why a lot of Indian people cannot speak their own native tongue (language)? There's a reason for that.

First, the US government put all of the Indian people on reservations, land they thought was too barren to be habitable. The Indians couldn't farm the land. The US government made the Indians solely dependent upon the government for food and clothing, and this course of actions resulted with forced starvation that was the second attempt at genocide instead of straight out killing Indians as sport like the buffalo (tatanka). The US government starved my people to death and continued to practice their version of chemical warfare by handing out blankets to the Indians laced with germs and diseases such as smallpox, mumps, measles, and scarlet fever — in other words, viruses. Another attempt at genocide.

The Indian people survived that, and to top it off, started to procreate. This sent a message to the US government that our people were not going nowhere, so they started another vicious campaign of genocide in the hopes of finally eradicating the Indian people. They sent doctors and dentists and medical personnel onto the rez' (reservations) with a front of providing medical health care services, but on the down low, begun a vicious campaign of sterilization, secretly sterilizing all of the Indian women folk that they could so they could not have babies. But we caught onto that, too, and no one wanted to go to the hospital or to the dentist because the dentists were using the Indians on the rez' as guinea pigs.

The Indian people didn't have any rights. They weren't even considered American citizens and we are indigenous

CHINO (CONT.)

continued from previous page

There isn't nothing American about being Indian in America today!

to this land! Ironical, huh! But as a people we overcame that oppression. We always knew the US wanted to wipe us off the face of mother earth and we had to pull together as a people, a race, a culture, in order to survive, and we're still in midst of their latest attempt at genocide by the government towards Indian people. This latest attempt is a spin-off from way back in the day when the US started putting the people on rez's throughout the states. Soon thereafter, the US started their campaign of total assimilation of Indians into American society. I say American society now, but in the words of the US government, the white society!

The adult Indian folk wasn't biting into that, so the US started kidnapping all of the Indian children and relocating them far away from their parents and families and putting them into boarding schools that were ran by the Catholic church. Back then, they were called Franciscan's or friars. The order of the day was to take the Indian out of the Indian kids, by forcing them to learn English and forbidding them from speaking their native tongue. This is the beginning of why our Indian children are unable to speak their natural born language today! If they were caught speaking Indian, the friars, priests, and nuns or sisters would beat them with sticks, flogging them with canes of bamboo! Besides that, the Indian kids were forced to cut their long hair, something that Indians take great pride in.

Now the girls were being subjected to sexual abuse — forcibly raped — and many became pregnant and then were forced to have to miscarry. Keep in mind, abortions weren't being practiced in that period, so you can only imagine how the girls came to lose their unborn. If that was going on, just imagine what the boys had to endure at the hands of a priest who likes to molest children. Of you read in the news today, priests are just barely now being exposed for child molestation. You have to go back to the root of that trend. Some of these cases today go way back into the 1950's and 60's. One can only imagine what our young brothers and sisters had to go through. They had no voice to speak up on that cruelty. They had no one to turn to for help or moral support.

The Indian children relied on themselves. They formed secret societies, and on the down low, continued to speak their native tongue and continued to sing and dance to their Indian songs. They held onto their Indian traditions and Indian ways because our relatives had to go through this persecution. I'm thankful to my elders. They paved the path for me and all my relations to be here today, co-existing in a world that tried to annihilate us. These Indian kids, after boarding school, were forced to live with white families to sort of completely erase their Indian identities! But that didn't work.

The Indian kids most of them eventually found their way back home to their Indian families, but at what cost? On the outside, they looked Indian, but not on the inside they had traits and characteristics of white folk, so they had to learn how to be and act Indian again. The US took this method of assimilation a step further by the 1940's, 50's, and 60's — an act of Congress dubbed the Indian Relocation Act. The US started making promises to all of the reservations saying if families signed-up for the relocation program, they would pay for them to leave the rez' and relocate to urban areas such as cities across the US.

A lot of Indian families signed up because they thought they were being offered an opportunity at a better life. Anything would have been better than living under third

world conditions, as it is on the rez'. The US housing and jobs in the big cities. Many families fell for that, including my own. That's how my family went from the rez' to the city.

Once most Indian families arrived in these cities throughout the US, the government didn't make due on their promise of housing and jobs. In fact, the Indian men and women couldn't find work. They didn't have any work skills, trades, or vocational training. Soon, these Indian families found themselves in some dire straits: no jobs, no skills, and no training. They were forced again to depend on the government by going on welfare. This was a stereotype that all uneducated America had towards the Indian plight. For years ignorant people said, "All they do is drink alcohol and live on welfare." A lot of Indian men and women turned to alcohol to ease their pain and sorrow. They weren't prepared for such a drastic cultural shock! Families were broken up, children became wards of the state. Families had to learn fast how to survive in a hostile environment.

When these Indian families left the rez', they were full-blooded Indian, but soon they started to have interracial relations and had children that were now half-Indian and half-white, Mexican, African, etc., and these half-breeds became the subject of ridicule and humiliation, and their children were born to interracial parents, thus their children were now 1/4 Indian. Mind you, today the Indian population in the US is a mere one million and some change! That number has been on the uprise because the red nation has recognized what the US government was trying to accomplish.

The US only recognizes Indians if they have 1/4 Indian blood or more in them. Recently, that number has been lowered. Out of the million plus Indians in the US, how many do you think are full-blooded as opposed to 1/4 blood? The number is not good, but is this coincidence? If we were to stay the course with this plan of the government, by the year 2050 there would be no more full-blooded Indians in the US, and the 1/4 blood would be in their place, and every one that fell under the set blood quantum of the government would not be recognized as being Indian! That, my friends, is genocide of an entire race, a culture, and a people, but as always, we recognized this latest attempt to wipe us off the face of the Earth and we started going back to the rez', going back to our old Indian ways, embracing our traditions, building our blood lines so that we don't perish off this earth.

This history is not taught in school. Those history books don't teach you about our Indian plight. The following is taken from the book titled "Native Heart" written by an Indian author, Gabriel Brown. Here he sums this piece up for us: "History is not a matter of semantics. It's a matter of acquiring wisdom. That comes from learning from the past." Also, "We can't go forward until we know where we've been; unless we know the past, how can we have a future?" Finally, "History as we've been taught in school is more propaganda than knowledge of past events, but many buy into it. For them, it's the only way to buy into the system and have the chance to chase that illusive 'American Dream.' The cost is their identity."

Believe in who you are brothers and sisters. Take pride in your heritage, nourish it, and flourish together and stand united as a victorious people. Don't give in to defeat. Don't give up the fight or the right to co-exist amongst hatred and racism. Let that trait be someone else's downfall. Keep your head up all my relations.

STRANGER This Stranger came out of the cuts about a year ago, and has been pretty much a regular in your face contributor from the get. Stranger writes us from High Desert State Prison in Susanville, CA. He holds very little back as he does his part to help break the cycle of incarceration.

Hey There Strangers!

How are all of you doing? Hopefully, when you pick up this Beat and you read these lines, it finds you in good spirits, and if not, I hope The Beat gives you better spirits.

I know there is a lot of you that haven't heard of me, and it's been awhile since I wrote anything to The Beat. Well here I go with these poems... I had already sent "My Last Day," "Caught Up In The Game," and "Rest In Peace," but I did a couple changes and added more to them. I hope you like them! I'm also sending one new poem that's called "Guilty." I hope you also like it and learn something out of all of them. Well don't take it wrong, I'm not in the mood to write, but there is a lot going on in my life right now, but I will write a little something anyway...

Last week my family came to visit me and they gave me some very bad news. They told me that my wife passed away. I'm trying not to let it get to me, but it's hard. I knew it would happen, just not so soon. She had anemia, and it got really bad, but I have to realize that it's part of life. It'll always hurt, but I know it had a reason.

The hardest part will be for our daughter. She lost her dad to the system and now her mom, too. I'll be the best dad from here till I get out. Now I need to stay away from problems for my daughter.

For those who do not know, I was facing 99 years with 3 life sentences, but I got my time reduced on an appeal to seventeen years and no life. I hope I get another chance to be out. I've been here my whole daughter's life. Right now she is too young to understand — and a lot of you as well — but remember, everything is part of life. It all happens for a reason. All of you, instead of crying over a couple days, months, or even years, be glad you're alive and are getting a second chance when you get out. There are a lot of people who wish they could have ten years to do. Think of it as another chance and use it before it's too late.

Well that's it for now. All of you take care of yourselves.

With regard...

My Last Day

It was a hot, late night

When I remember kicking back

Bumping the oldies off the homie "Chaparro's" (Shorty's), Cadillac...

Parked on the block drinking pisto (beer), and "Lazy Boy"

Watching out, keeping trucha (watch), for the black and white

Kicking back, bien de aquellas (way out), on the crazy night....

The block was rolling just like any other day

The only thing I didn't know is that I was going to get sprayed

"Damn loco" (fool), a ranfla (car), hit the block

There were fools hanging out and next thing you know, I got shot....

Down I fell and it seemed as if it were all a dream

All I kept hearing was the homies screaming

"Get up Stranger! Don't die!" They kept saying

I tried to get up, but in his arms I kept laying....

I looked around and saw my homies everywhere

There were faces looking down at me. Then, I started getting scared

I was feeling cold and my body numbed all up

I looked at my homie, but I couldn't even talk...

So then and there I prayed and said, "Please dear God,

Don't let this be my last day."

I closed my eyes and went into a deep daze...

The juras (cops) came. They blocked the calle (street) all up.

All I kept hearing was the homie got shot

The medics worked on me while the juras were all over

Hitting up my homies all about what went down...

I got rushed to the hospital, I guess to cut me up

Caught Up In A Gang

A deadly image and my life fading away

I relax and kick it thinking about my gangster ways

In my head I can see my homies

And some jainas (females) also that know me...

From the block you know we're at the right spot

Where everyday we slanged crystal and rock

I cock my gun because there are still more to come

Always making sure my rivals get some...

Drinking like I'm mad, on a crazy trip

I stop to think and it really ain't nothing

The hell with it because it's all in the past

If only I knew it wouldn't even last...

I miss all the crazy times I had

I always talked a gang of trash

And went head up with my step-dad

For some problems we couldn't resolve

While in my pocket, a cuete (gun) that revolved...

But not for him. My mind was full of other sins

I even took his ride with my Slim Jim

Those were the days to the beginning of a maze

I even remember the first time that I blazed...

I sit back and reminisce of the good ol' days

Ditching parties, getting high, and showing my crazy ways

Hanging till late at night

On the block selling dope till the break of light...

Right in front of my pad is where I sat

Living life in the fast lane

While at the same time thinking it was all a game...

Juvenile Hall, then I hit YA

Strolling in my clothes, representing to the fullest

Holding my own as a young fool

Thinking at the time everything was cool....

We were gang banging pelones (bald heads), tatted down cabrones (fools)

I hung around with nothing but crazy matadors (killers)

That's the life I lived and the only thing I know

Three strikes and 99 with an 'L' is how my story goes...

So much crap I overlooked

And just like that my damn life was took

But I didn't give a damn. I'm a Mexican

And for that I'm here remembering...

Believe me; it's all the same routine

So who'll be the next fool to come and be me

You see I got caught up in a bang

There's no going back, homie.

I was facing 99 years with 3 life sentences, but I got my time reduced on an appeal to seventeen years and no life.

Slowly I was dying. Now I know I'm stuck

I hear the doctors coming, rushing trying to save me,

But there's nothing else to do, so we'll wait and see...

Now I'm stranded in a coma on a life-support machine

With my family arriving and no way to win.

My mom starts crying and my Pops is holding tight

With tears in his eyes telling my to fight...

Everything went black and I got cold as ice

When a big, bright, flash of light appeared before my eyes

It's a shame we die for the gang that never ends,

But now I know, now I understand...

Now I know I'm gone, but that's the way it all goes

I'm laying in a casket with some gangster clothes

Homies walking up to pay their last respects

With tears in their eyes dressed up in all black...

"Descanse en paz" ("Rest in peace") is what they all say

Soon I'll be buried and on my way

From ashes to ashes and dust to dust

It's payback time and in my homeboys I trust...

An eye for an eye is what it's all about

I know my homie will get back at them because I had mucho clout

I guess this is it now, it's time to ride

In a big, blue hearse with chrome on the side...

Bumper to bumper all the way down the street

Headed to the cemetery rolling deep

Headed down the 'hood on my way

I never though I'd come to see my last day.

STRANGER (CONT.)

Rest In Peace

Aqui estoy (Here I am) thinking about my carnalito
Every time you cross my mind
Tu sabes que me aguito (You know I get sad)
I remember when we used to kick back
And have a blast
It's hard to think that now. That's back in the past...
I remember those times like it was yesterday
I know if I were there
And you were here, it'll be the same way...
We never thought we'd go
Through anything like this
Now we sit back saying rest in peace...
All the homies got your name
Tatted behind their neck
Some on their chest and back just to show you respect...
You're always on our minds
Every day and every night
We miss you carnal, and things just ain't right....

Every chance that we get
We sit by your grave site
Thinking about you looking up at the sky...
Mom sits back wiping tears from her eyes
We sit and talk about you
Then she starts to cry...
She says how much she wants to hold you back again
In her arms like she used to
Holding you by your hands....
Every night we pray and think about you bro'
It's hard to accept
That you had to go...
I sit back drifting and reminiscing of you

Of all the firme tiempos (good times
And the things we used to do...
Simon carnal (Yeah bro') you're in my mente (mind) all the time
Tu vienes primero (You come first)
And you'll never stay behind...
Your kids are growing up
And they ask about you bro'
They say they miss you Daddy, but I guess you know...
I say you're up in the sky
Looking down at them
They stare at one another like they don't understand...
Damn carnal, if you could only take time
Back to the days
When everything was fine...

Sometimes I sit back in the living room
Checking out your pictures
Listening to some oldie tunes...
The ones you liked
The ones you used to bump
"Confessing the Feeling," "Try Me," and "Let's Get It On"...
It takes me back
To the days when you were here
Sometimes I close my eyes and I could hear you real clear...
Rest in peace in the heavens above
Those you left behind
From us, they get nothing but love...
Simon carnal, that's how it is — you're being missed
Now all we have are the firme memories
The ones we share, wishing that you were here with us
Now another firme brother and a son that's lost...
I know we'll see each other
Because we'll be there some day
Rest in peace carnal. For you, we all pray.

**Guilty! What the ... do you mean?
You have no evidence.
You can't place me at the scene....
A dream, hell no. They say I got to go.**

Guilty

Up in court, we all have to wait. Put your life in the hands
Of the jury that debates and creates you into something that
you're not
They try to get you caught, but can't pin you to the spot...
No — evidence fails, still they hunt you like a hound
Must be because we're down for the brown.... Still real, so feel me
when I say
That they'll lock you up for your gangster ways
You pay your time in jail, the judge doesn't give a damn, homie, I
can tell
Screw the punk. I'm done. Give me a chance.
That's how I feel while I'm in this room
The jury doesn't come out, I hope they come out soon....

Still in court for another damn session
It sticks in my head. In other words, I'm stressing...
And guessing that the jury is hung. I want to be gone, but they're
taking too long.
It's on. They notify us, the verdict is in
Is this the beginning of my life, or is it the end?
Mexican and proud so I keep my head up
The last thing on my mind is that I would get stuck...
Guilty! What the ... do you mean?
You have no evidence. You can't place me at the scene....

A dream, hell no. They say I got to go.
They handcuff my ass and take me out the side door.
To my cell, I bail to await my court date
I'm innocent, so I'm full of hate....
I wait, damn, I'm not the man
They've set me up. They had a plan...

I lay back and try to erase
The time I have to face
Hoping I don't catch an "L" in this lame place.
My case was wack. Now they're trying to give me time.
Second-degree murder is my so-called crime....
"We find him guilty" is what they all say.
How much time will they give me?

That's what sticks in my head...
I try not to think about it, wouldn't you?
Tell me what am I supposed to do?
Should I wait and take this like a man?
Or never show up to court and just run?
Now it's too late for me to debate
I'm stuck in this cell in this mindstate...
It makes me pissed
To be like this
Now knowing if my name is on the "Life" list

Now, after fifteen years behind these walls, our desires are common: to clear these gates for one more try. On the real, though, I would gladly, without hesitation, forego, pawn or exchange any and all absolution I might ever be afforded just to prove to them they were right all along.